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# Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

*Provisional*

## 6114th meeting

Wednesday, 29 April 2009, 3.15 p.m.
New York

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| *President:* | Mr. Heller/Mr. Puente | (Mexico) |
| *Members:* | Austria | Mr. Ebner |
| | Burkina Faso | Ms. Fofana |
| | China | Ms. Li Xinyan |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. González |
| | Croatia | Ms. Kožar |
| | France | Mr. Fieschi |
| | Japan | Mr. Ashiki |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Dabbashi |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Lukiyantsev |
| | Turkey | Mr. Ünal |
| | Uganda | Mr. Muhumuza |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Ms. Steele |
| | United States of America | Ms. Lavin |
| | Viet Nam | Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha |

## Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158)

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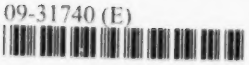

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*The meeting resumed at 3.20 p.m.*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Armenia, Benin and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to request that this afternoon's speakers kindly limit their statements to a maximum of five minutes, taking into account that we still have an extensive list of speakers who would like to take the floor this afternoon.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Marie-Ange Lukinana Mufwankol, Minister of Gender, Family and Children Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and give her the floor.

**Ms. Mufwankol** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first of all, let me convey the warm congratulations of the Congolese delegation for the effective way in which you are directing the Council's deliberations in this month of April. I would like to thank you in particular for having convened this meeting of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, the difficult subject that we are debating today. In this regard, I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his very objective and informative report (S/2009/158). My thanks go as well to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whom we had the honour to receive in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the presentation of her edifying report on this subject, highlighting the obligation to put an end to recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Her visit and others, which have helped advance the cause of women and children, have had positive repercussions.

The theme of today's meeting on violence against children is of vital importance for our country, because in this area the Democratic Republic of the Congo is in the centre of the storm. The Democratic Republic is coming out of a long political, social and economic crisis that has been worsened by disastrous consequences of the war of aggression and armed conflict, with their stream of acute violence, in which women and children, who have been massively exposed, exploited and impoverished, have been the primary victims.

Here, we would say specifically that increasingly, the recruitment and abusive use of children is the effect of both foreign and national armed groups belonging to various rebel factions. We would also note that, for the purposes of peace and national reconciliation, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) itself, the regular Congolese army, has been engaged in a long process of folding in large waves of former rebels of all grades, even commanders, since 2003.

Given the scope of the challenge, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the plea regarding the need for effective support by the international community in seeking a stable peace and in promoting democracy, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other countries in the Great Lakes region and throughout the world.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) has edified us on progress made and on measures taken by the parties with a view to eliminating grave violations, which are nevertheless still continuing. Concerned by this situation, the elected institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, led by President Joseph Kabila, are doing everything they can to put an end to these grave violations of the fundamental rights of children.

Among the efforts made, one can cite the promulgation in January 2009 of the statute to protect children, which brings in international standards for the protection of children and is a complement to the law against sexual violence of 2006. We can also cite the establishment of the Fund to Protect Children and Promote Women, as well as the Agency for Combating Violence against Women and Children. Also significant are the reinforcement of the programme to fight impunity and to help programmes for disarmament,

demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, especially with respect to child soldiers.

Moreover, in a determined political will, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children Affairs, has launched an appeal for a general mobilization to combat violence and other violations of human rights perpetrated against women and children. In November 2008 this general mobilization was expressed by the Campaign of Congolese Women at a level of national outrage in the form of the petition "Je dénonce" and in a gigantic protest march on 16 December. This message translated the essential concern of Congolese women and children regarding their right to life, peace, security, human dignity and well-being.

All these efforts have been made possible thanks primarily to the cooperation between my Government, the United Nations system and other partners that support development. We therefore support implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General as contained in the different reports on children in armed conflict as well as recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The programmes for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration and for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation, both for national armed groups and foreign groups, must continue and must be brought to completion.

In order to put a real end to the agony of Congolese children, my delegation can only reiterate the position of Congolese women and children, which calls for greater and more resolute involvement by the Security Council to strengthen international solidarity to build peace, territorial integrity and sovereignty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It calls for the complete eradication of foreign and national armed groups, created by the poor management by all of the international humanitarian corridor of 1994, whose goals to save 1 million people's lives following the genocide were nevertheless noble. However, for the peaceful innocent Congolese hosts, that corridor became a conduit for exporting death, for the widespread rape of children and women, for pillaging national resources and for the prevalence of AIDS, with a heavy toll of 5 million dead and 2 million displaced, primarily women and children.

We need the Security Council's support for the promotion of an international emergency reconstruction plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the example of Marshall Plan, with Congolese children and women as the main target. Lastly, democracy needs to be promoted in the other countries of the Great Lakes Region, and national and intercommunity dialogues should be held, with a view to eliminating latent conflicts in neighbouring countries that are feeding destabilization of peace in the subregion, resulting in the huge and cyclical suffering of our respective populations.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to thank you once again and the many other speakers for their positive contributions towards lasting solutions not only for the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also for all countries concerned. For us, it is a question of putting an end to war, impunity and the unspeakable suffering of our populations and, in particular, of children in areas of conflict.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Minister for her important statement, which I am certain all members of the Council have noted.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

**Mr. Muñoz** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening a debate on the important topic of children in armed conflict. I would like to express my support for your country on account of the difficult time that it is currently experiencing. Chile endorses the statement by the representative of Ireland, the country that is chairing the Human Security Network to which Chile belongs.

Although the international community recognizes children as subjects in law, in reality their rights are disregarded daily in situations of armed conflict. For that reason, we support the work done by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, established by resolution 1612 (2005), as well as by UNICEF, various non-governmental organizations and civil society, actors that are jointly contributing to the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism under that resolution. We also acknowledge the significant work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and are following with interest her activities in the field. We also thank her for her presence this past Saturday at a football match between

ambassadors and the Secretary-General in aid of the children of Sierra Leone.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Chile reiterates its commitment to the initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against children, in particular, those that we are discussing today.

True to that commitment, on 25 September 2008, Chile endorsed the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, known as the Paris Principles, which reflect significant progress in prevention and reintegration and in the special needs of girls in armed conflicts. In accordance with the Principles, we support multilateral actions aimed at lessening and eradicating this scourge by means of more consistent planning, sustainable reintegration and the promotion of prevention activities aimed at protecting the environment of children.

The Council should use its authority to identify and punish those responsible for the atrocities documented in the latest report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and to implement its important recommendations. Chile believes that the Council should enhance the protection of children, enabling the strengthening of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, envisaged in resolution 1612 (2005), such that it can be triggered in cases of intentional actions that do not constitute collateral damage. We support the recommendation that giving equal attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern be considered. We particularly welcome the recommendation that the Council consider, at a minimum, expanding the criteria for the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General to include parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict. Likewise, we note with interest the possibility of addressing other types of abuse, including, if possible, the intentional killing and maiming of children, which, like the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence, constitute deliberate and selective acts reflecting criminal intent.

Similarly, we call for guarantees that the mandates of the relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions continue to include specific provisions for the protection of children, the permanent deployment of child protection advisers and the training of troops on this issue. In that regard, since its creation in 2002, the Chilean Joint Centre for Peacekeeping Operations has been training Chilean and foreign civilians, military and police, using a comprehensive approach.

We also urge that the monitoring and reporting of violations against children should be accompanied by effective measures to prevent such violations and to generate timely reactions. Lastly, we stress the importance of the Working Group having the necessary resources to carry out its work effectively and to use the tools at its disposal, in particular field visits and emergency meetings.

Almost four years after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), Chile reiterates its commitment to actively contribute to the elimination of all forms of violence affecting children throughout the world from armed conflict to urban violence. We will continue to support all initiatives that seek compliance with international commitments in that area.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Mr. Windsor** (Australia): Australia is very grateful for this opportunity to restate its commitment to strong and effective measures to protect and rehabilitate children from harm and exploitation in situations of armed conflict. Australia worked to ensure the renewal of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and we commend Ms. Coomaraswamy's progress in mainstreaming this issue.

Australia recognizes the importance of effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and, to that end, in September 2008 endorsed the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups and committed funding to UNICEF for its work on child soldiers, particularly in Sri Lanka.

Australia welcomes recent progress in implementing resolution 1612 (2005) and in

operationalizing the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We are pleased that the mechanism has now been adopted in all situations listed in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2009/158). That achievement will be further advanced by ensuring that all parties develop concrete, time-bound action plans that meet international standards. We commend the recent real progress in halting the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

However, more remains to be done. Australia is particularly concerned about ongoing reports of the forced recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka and of the continued recruitment and use of child soldiers by the national forces and other parties in Myanmar. The current situation in Sri Lanka only serves to underscore the serious impact that that conflict has on children. We owe it to all children in situations of armed conflict to strengthen the current monitoring and reporting process.

Australia reiterates that there should be no hierarchy of treatment amongst the six grave violations. Australia is very concerned at the large number of reported sexual violations contained in the Secretary-General's report. We are particularly concerned at the significant number of reported cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Clearly, rape and other forms of sexual violence are endemic in many conflict situations worldwide. The threat that this poses to peace and security was recognized by the Council when it adopted resolution 1820 (2008). The Council should consider the feasibility of a new resolution to expand the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include, at a minimum, rape and other forms of sexual violence as a trigger for listing.

We recognize that the mechanism should be expanded only if it enhances the protection of children in armed conflict and the effectiveness of resolution 1612 (2005). A well-supported and adequately resourced Working Group is crucial to the mechanism's effectiveness. That would not only ensure that the Working Group is well placed to respond to any new situations that may be included in its agenda, but also assist its ability to respond promptly to rapidly evolving situations of urgent concern.

International efforts to address the problem of children in armed conflict must be accompanied by effective action at the national level. Concerned States, including Myanmar, should allow United Nations access to listed non-State parties for the purpose of discussing possible child protection measures. Effective domestic legislation, including legislation criminalizing rape and other sexual crimes, is of paramount importance. We encourage the adoption by concerned parties of national action plans on sexual violence and commend the efforts of parties in Côte d'Ivoire in that regard.

With regard to the broader issue of violence against children, I am pleased to announce that today, the Australian Government released "Time for Action", a major report prepared by the Australian National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. The Australian Government simultaneously announced its intention to move immediately to advance 18 of the 20 priority recommendations of the report. The Government will further consider the remaining two recommendations within the context of developing a national plan to reduce violence against women and children.

Australia encourages the Working Group to utilize the full range of tools available to it in responding to situations of concern. Given the valuable and constructive results of the Special Representative's field visits, including her recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there may be real merit in the Group's visiting situations in which persistent violations occur or in which there has been no reaction to the Group's recommendations. Persistent violators should not go unpunished. National and international accountability is at the heart of resolution 1612 (2005) and will have a significant deterrent effect.

In conclusion, the commitment of all Member States is required to realize the full potential of resolution 1612 (2005) and to further the fight against impunity. We must work together to fight the scourge of violence against children in all its forms. Australia remains firmly dedicated to that goal.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Netherlands.

**Mr. De Klerk** (Netherlands): The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement made this morning by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make a few additional remarks -- first, on the

expansion of the trigger mechanism for monitoring and reporting; and secondly, on impunity.

I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict and for the work that Mexico is doing in this area.

It is a sad reality that, as we speak, many children around the world are being harmed for life by armed conflicts. Sometimes, they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. More often than not, they are a tool or a target of shameless violence. Whatever the case, we all have an urgent obligation to do whatever we can to protect children from armed conflict. That is a political and moral imperative for all of us. Along with the integrity of our children, the integrity of the Organization and everything it stands for is at stake. In children we see our future, and in their suffering during armed conflict we see the dark side of humankind. We heard impressive testimony to that effect earlier in the debate.

The Netherlands strongly supports the valuable work of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and that of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report on that subject (S/2009/158).

We commend the Security Council for the important progress made on its agenda related to children and armed conflict, in particular with regard to the use and recruitment of child soldiers. However, the Council should take further action to ensure that children caught in armed conflicts are protected from violence and related threats to their security and well-being. To that end, the Council should expand its focus to include the other grave violations against children in armed conflict, as they affect much larger numbers of children and result in terrible and long-lasting consequences.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism has shown its value. Effective monitoring and reporting help to reveal the extent and severity of violations, increase the accountability of those who target, abuse or exploit children and, last but not least, strengthen programmes to assist and protect children in situations of armed conflict. One step that the Security Council should take is to extend the applicability of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to other situations in which grave violations against children in armed conflict occur — first and foremost, rape and other grave sexual violence.

Why should the Council do so? Over the past 20 years, rape and other forms of sexual violence have been documented in at least 50 conflicts, affecting millions of individuals, predominantly girls and women. Like the recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of sexual violence are intentional acts committed by individual perpetrators. Parties to armed conflict can take action to hold those perpetrators accountable for their actions. Progress in ending such violations can be measured, allowing for de-listing, an incentive for change.

In dozens of ongoing armed conflicts, sexual violence continues to threaten the safety of women and girls on a daily basis. In some armed conflicts, boys also become victims of sexual violence, although in smaller numbers than girls. Rape and sexual violence against children may have long-term and long-lasting consequences, and their impact may affect future generations as well. Think, for instance, about the situation of children born as a result of rape and about their traumas, which may damage them — and, again, others — for life.

In its resolution 1820 (2008), the Council has already stressed that sexual violence can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, and has expressed its readiness to adopt appropriate steps to address widespread or systematic sexual violence. The expansion of the trigger mechanism to cover the crime of rape and other forms of grave sexual violence against children should be seen as an appropriate step.

My second point: In most cases, the Security Council has not taken strong steps to address accountability and end impunity for perpetrators of violations against children, especially with regard to persistent violators. As stated before in this Council, abuse really stops only when perpetrators have been brought to justice. Anything short of that means a continuation of the violation of victims' integrity. That is why ending impunity is a critical element in ending violations and abuses against children. The Member States concerned should take effective action to bring to justice individuals responsible for violations of children's rights. Those who recruit or use child

soldiers, those who rape or commit other grave sexual violence against children — all should be held to account. We therefore stress the role of the International Criminal Court in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes falling within its jurisdiction. Where national systems of justice fail, either because of the unwillingness or because of the inability to genuinely prosecute such violations against children in armed conflict, the situation should be referred to the Court.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Park In-kook** (Republic of Korea): First, allow me to commend the work of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to protect children affected by armed conflict with a view to ending the grave violations against them. My delegation would also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for their dedication and continued efforts in addressing the plight of children in armed conflict. We also welcome the renewed mandate of the Special Representative.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158), which covers 15 situations on the agenda of the Security Council and five other areas of concern in a comprehensive way, including a section on rape and other grave forms of sexual violence against children during times of conflict.

The information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children contained in the report shows that there has been progress in some countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire. However, in some situations, child recruitment remains an issue of serious concern.

Only nine out of 63 armed groups listed in the annexes of the report have signed action plans to stop the recruitment of child soldiers. As emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, concerned Member States should allow contact between the United Nations and non-State parties to prepare action plans without prejudice to the political and legal status of those armed groups. Dealing with persistent violators also remains a critical issue that must be addressed with a sense of urgency.

Within the Secretary-General's report, 19 persistent perpetrators have been identified, increasing the number from the 16 listed in last year's report. Many of these residual perpetrators have also been responsible for committing other grave violations, such as rape and sexual violence against children. The Security Council needs to stand resolute and apply targeted measures to these persistent perpetrators. One way to facilitate the real use of targeted measures is to establish systematic communications between the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees.

The delegation of the Republic of Korea, like those of many other Member States, is disturbed by the continuing deplorable situation of sexual violence against children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General's report gives us a worrisome picture, especially of the situations in Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Somalia and the Sudan. There is universal consensus that widespread and systematic sexual violence against children in armed conflicts are grave crimes, as stated in the Secretary-General's report. Unless the Security Council and the international community respond strongly to these violations, such troubling cases will continue.

This morning, we had a truly invaluable opportunity to confirm the atrocity of sexual violence against children through the firsthand account of an eyewitness. In this context, my delegation strongly endorses the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Security Council adopt an incremental approach by first including rape and other grave sexual violence as an additional criterion for inclusion in the annexes, along with the recruitment and use of children. We emphasize that a priority step to strengthen child protection on the ground is to expand the trigger of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include grave sexual violence.

Addressing sexual violence is an important system-wide priority of the United Nations. As such, resolutions 1612 (2005), 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) should be implemented in a mutually reinforcing manner, with a view to maximizing the synergy effect.

My delegation welcomes the progress made in the mainstreaming of the issue of children in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. The work

of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs in developing policy directives and guidance is significant. We encourage the further integration of children's concerns into all mission planning instruments and processes, including the deployment of child protection advisers to all relevant missions.

Finally, my delegation hopes that our open debate today testifies to our strong commitment to this critical issue, not through our numerous verbal statements, but by taking concrete and resolute action to ensure the protection of children exposed to and suffering from armed conflict. There is a wide range of actions that the Security Council can and should take. Some of the urgent actions, such as expanding the trigger of the monitoring and response mechanism to include rape and other grave sexual violence, will require a new resolution. In this vein, we strongly support the immediate commencement of serious work by the Council members with a view to adopting such a resolution as soon as possible. Safeguarding the rights of the next generation of vulnerable children in global conflict zones is in our hands. Now is the time to act.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

**Mr. Viinanen** (Finland): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. This debate is about our children and grandchildren. There cannot be a more important matter than this.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Children bear the heaviest burden of armed conflict, although they are the least responsible for it. The Nordic countries would like to reiterate their deep gratitude for the tireless efforts made by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to record violations against children, to bring them to the attention of the international community, to call the perpetrators to account and to make proposals for concrete action to monitor the violence and to bring relief to the children who are suffering. We fully endorse the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and the recommendations made therein.

All forms of violence against children must be condemned. Each of the six categories of grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005) must be addressed with equal vigour. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are heinous crimes. In addition to the immediate physical, mental and emotional damage, they often cause lasting harm to sexual and reproductive health. They spread HIV and other serious diseases. They cause disabilities that diminish the capacity for learning, safe parenthood and social interaction. All too often, it is the victim who is stigmatized while the perpetrator escapes punishment.

Girls and women constitute the largest group of victims in armed conflict. As the Secretary-General's report shows, they are particularly vulnerable to gender-based and sexual violence perpetrated by all sides in conflicts, sometimes even by the peacekeepers who are supposed to safeguard them. The united condemnation of such crimes by the international community has been heartening. However, urgent and forceful action is still required. The Nordic countries fully endorse the recommendation that the Security Council expand, at a minimum, the criteria that trigger listing in the annexes to this report to include rape and other grave sexual violence.

The efforts to monitor and address gender-based and sexual violence and other grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005) could benefit from increasing interaction and collaboration among the United Nations and regional actors. For example, synergies should be established between the monitoring mechanisms established to support the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

We would like to express our satisfaction with the work undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in designing a global policy on child protection advisers and in mainstreaming child protection issues in the work of the peacekeeping and political missions of the United Nations. We look forward to the implementation of that policy by rolling it out to the field.

The Nordic countries strongly commend the efforts of civil society. In spite of their often limited resources and the most dangerous working conditions, local non-governmental organizations provide invaluable information and concrete action that no

other actor could provide with such intensity, reach and effectiveness. We note with deep appreciation the support provided by civil society organizations in developing more effective policies and other tools to protect children in armed conflict. We welcome the emphasis of the Secretary-General on cooperation with non-State actors.

Recruitment and use of children by armed groups is a persistent problem and a reason for deep concern. The recruitment of boys and girls to take part in hostilities is a violation of international law and a war crime in both international and non-international armed conflicts. The prohibition on recruiting or using child soldiers must be matched by effective implementation at the domestic level. The Nordic countries again wish to emphasize the need for all parties to armed conflicts to present concrete, time-bound action plans ending and preventing the recruitment of child soldiers. Among the greatest challenges we face is that of impunity.

The first case before the International Criminal Court (ICC) to have proceeded to trial phase, the one against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, is a milestone in the efforts to end impunity for the use of child soldiers. The Nordic countries call on all States to become parties to the Rome Statute and to effectively implement its provisions in their national legislations. Moreover, we urge the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to use the full range of measures at its disposal, especially when it comes to persistent perpetrators. We call upon the Council to ensure that interaction and cooperation among the Working Group and the sanctions committees is made more speedy and effective, and to use the most effective measures at its disposal, including targeted sanctions. The Council should refer violations against children in armed conflict to the ICC for investigation and prosecution when national Governments fail to carry out their responsibility to protect those children. At the same time, we wish to recall that the rule of law, including a functioning judicial system at the national level, is a necessary condition for peace and stability.

The growing incidence of attacks on schools recounted in the Secretary-General's report is of deep concern to the Nordic countries. We call upon United Nations country teams, peacekeepers and Governments to actively negotiate among community stakeholders and parties to armed conflict to designate schools as safe sanctuaries.

In concluding, the Nordic countries wish to express their deep concern with the unacceptable suffering of children in the military end game in northern Sri Lanka. The ongoing recruitment of children into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), as well as the fact that civilians continue to be prevented from leaving the war zone, fill us with dread. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to protect all the civilians in the area, especially children, in accordance with its obligations under humanitarian law.

This year we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We call for universal adherence and implementation of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols. The Nordic countries would like to reiterate their encouragement to the Security Council and to the entire United Nations system to give children in armed conflict the attention they deserve and to constantly seek the most effective means to improve their situation. Institutional prerogatives or procedural traditions should never stand in the way of concrete action.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

**Mr. Kavanagh** (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Sir, and the members of the Council for this opportunity to address the Council on the important issue of children and armed conflict. Ireland also aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Ireland welcomes Mexico's initiative in organizing today's open debate of the Council. We strongly support all endeavours made at the United Nations and at the regional and national levels which seek to address in an effective manner the situation of children in armed conflict.

Ireland commends ongoing efforts to ensure that this important issue remains firmly on the agenda of the Security Council. We support the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on children and armed conflict established under Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) — as well as the significant work being carried out by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Ireland warmly welcomes the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and the recommendations therein. In particular, we commend the significant progress made in mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. The deployment of child protection advisers in a number of peacekeeping operations is a positive step and helps to enhance the monitoring of the situation, improve dialogue with parties to conflict and ensure systematic training on child rights and protection.

Ireland is the current Chair of the Human Security Network and notes that the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children has been one of the priority issues for the Network since its establishment. As part of our chairmanship, Ireland has chosen to focus on the theme of gender-based violence. The prevalence of gender-based violence during times of conflict, in areas where the rule of law is frequently absent and impunity is widespread, remains a grave concern. Successive resolutions of the Security Council have also recognized those egregious abuses. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) highlights the human rights of girls and their right to protection from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Resolution 1820 (2008) attacks the targeting of girls through the use of sexual violence and demands that all parties to armed conflict take appropriate measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

The Secretary-General's report expressly acknowledges that Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008) are "mutually reinforcing" and that steps should be taken to streamline documentation and sharing of information on rape and sexual violence.

In that regard, the initiation of consultations between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and relevant United Nations agencies and departments, in order to devise a strategy to strengthen data collection and reporting, is, we believe, a positive development. Ireland welcomes the attention given in the Secretary-General's report to rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict.

The report reaffirms that rape and other forms of sexual violence are grave crimes and, under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population. In particular, Ireland supports the Secretary-General's recommendation, set out in the report, that the Council expand the criteria for violations that would trigger the listing of a party in the annexes attached to such reports. By the same token, we support the recommendation to include, henceforth, express reference to those parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children, as well as intentional killing and maiming of children.

Ireland continues to support the valuable efforts of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her Office. She has done great work by raising awareness, engaging with parties to conflict through field visits and ensuring that this issue is kept high on the international agenda.

Ireland further commends ongoing efforts on this crucial topic made by UNICEF, other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, along with non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and national authorities.

In conclusion, my country is committed to working closely with the United Nations system, as well as with all other relevant organizations, to ensure that steps are taken and progress is achieved towards improving the deplorable situation faced by children in armed conflicts around the world.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Ms. Shalev** (Israel): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important debate and for your leadership of the Security Council during this month.

As some may know, we are celebrating today the sixty-first anniversary of the independence of the modern State of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, in the light of the importance of this debate and the issue at hand, I have decided to participate.

Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her great help and for her introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). Also, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain Le Roy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, for their

briefings. I am also very grateful for the moving testimony given this morning by Ms. Grace Akallo, as well as for her courage in surviving the horrors she faced and her willingness to share her experience with us. We wish to commend the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for its vital work in raising the profile of this issue and for working to protect children living in difficult circumstances caused by armed conflict.

There can be no doubt that, since the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1612 (2005), establishing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the increased international focus on this issue has resulted in improved protection for many of the estimated 300,000 child soldiers around the world. Among the notable achievements is the pressure exerted on armed groups to desist from child recruitment and to release youths who have already been conscripted into armed groups. Indeed, several armed groups have been de-listed from the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports, and the first trial initiated by the International Criminal Court earlier this year in The Hague is a milestone in the issue of child soldiers. In addition to encouraging the release of child soldiers, placing the spotlight on these violations and on those who commit them has the significant effect of discouraging future abuse by others.

Another area that warrants greater attention is rape and other grave forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict — in this case, violence of the most despicable kind: violence perpetrated against children. There is a growing consensus in favour of adding this violation as a trigger for the listing of specific groups that warrant the attention and monitoring of the Working Group. These acts are deliberate and are often carried out as tools of war and terror. Israel adds its voice to those of States calling for the addition of grave sexual violence to the list of violations that trigger the listing of a party in the Secretary-General's annexes.

Terrorism deliberately targeting civilians, including children, continues to plague many regions in the world. Only a few weeks ago, an Israeli child was murdered and another seriously wounded by an axe-wielding terrorist. In the recent armed conflict between Israel and the Hamas terrorist entity in Gaza, Hamas terrorists displayed the same callous disregard for the lives of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians, including children. They initiated the conflict by their years-long barrage of rockets and mortars launched from Gaza into Israel, killing, wounding and terrorizing civilians across the southern part of my country. These rockets and mortars were often launched from heavily populated civilian areas, very often in close proximity to schools and hospitals. During the recent conflict, Hamas terrorists hid among Gaza's civilian population, using and abusing them as human shields. While civilians have been too intimidated to denounce the terrorists for this abhorrent practice, the evidence for its widespread use is overwhelming and incontrovertible. And while children were trained, indoctrinated and used by Hamas in the hostilities, the Secretary-General's report states only that "community members are reluctant to provide information on cases of children used by armed forces or armed groups for fear of reprisals" (*S/2009/158, para. 86*).

We should also remember that childhood indoctrination into prejudice, hatred and the ways of terrorism has devastating effects. Indoctrination and incitement to violence is, regrettably, all too common in some areas in my region. More attention should be paid to this practice in the Special Representative's reports, and they should clearly and unequivocally condemn all such exploitation.

Israel follows with interest the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is a tireless advocate for children. Certain aspects of her work, however, deserve to be examined more carefully, especially those aspects in the reports which rely heavily on unsubstantiated allegations and which lack supporting detail. The practice is so extensive as to cast a shadow over these reports, and it does a general disservice to the cause of children and armed conflict. We urge the Office of the Special Representative to give greater attention to the invaluable process of carefully documenting and vetting the various sources of the information it receives.

Israel believes that more intensive work should be done to ensure the long-term effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. After intensive investment of resources to help stabilize a post-conflict situation, viable alternatives to violence need to be put in place as quickly as possible. These efforts must also be sustained until reintegration has been achieved. The

longer children languish in camps or, worse, continue to be compelled to take part in violence, the dimmer the prospects are for their effective reintegration, and formal education may never resume. Time is of the essence for preventing armed conflicts, but also for protecting individual children. To this end, a candid assessment of the Working Group's impact on various situations should be carried out in order to arrive at best practices.

Israel recognizes the work of all individuals and organizations dedicated to protecting children. Often, their work is carried out under very difficult circumstances, and their efforts deserve our unwavering support. We should seize this opportunity to reach international consensus on the issues of concern and together improve the situation for children in armed conflict around the globe.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

**Mr. Morejón** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his clear and detailed report on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158), which takes stock of the activities undertaken and progress achieved on this important issue. Very significant results have been attained, especially since 1999, when the issue of children affected by war became an official part of the Security Council's agenda. Since then, a number of resolutions have been adopted, setting out specific measures to improve the situation of children suffering under this scourge. As the report notes, there is no doubt that the provisions of the various relevant international instruments constitute a large, solid body of international law that will enable the international community to continue its work to defend children affected by armed conflict.

It is essential that international instruments be strengthened, extended and effectively applied in order to guarantee the necessary protection for children, especially given the persistence of conflicts of all kinds throughout the world. We support the Secretary-General's valuable initiatives in that regard, as well as the commitments undertaken by several countries to ensure the well-being and protection of children in armed conflict and to fully sensitize the authorities and civil society to their situation.

One of the saddest and tragic realities we have seen in various regions of the world is the deep suffering of children exposed to armed conflict. That intolerable reality — including the threats to children posed by murder, being orphaned, mutilation, abduction, lack of education and health care, and deep physical and psychological trauma, as well as the grave situation of refugee and displaced children exposed to violence, recruitment, sexual exploitation, disease, malnutrition and death — is reflected in the Secretary-General's reports.

The issue of refugees is of particular concern to my country. Since 2000, the number of displaced persons seeking refuge in Ecuador has grown at an unprecedented rate. Ecuador is host to the greatest number of persons in need of international protection in the entire western hemisphere. Protecting those thousands of people, including children who have been direct participants in armed conflict, is a priority of my Government's international policy.

Faced with this difficult humanitarian situation, the State of Ecuador has assumed, in the context of full respect for human rights and with a thorough sense of responsibility and solidarity, the commitment to protect refugees under several international instruments to which it is party. Since 2000, my Government has undertaken legal and institutional reforms to develop a system aimed ultimately at providing a flexible and effective response to the needs of those people, especially children and adolescents. The new State policy, implemented in particular in the border regions, seeks to encourage comprehensive economic and social development and to promote zones of peace.

My delegation also wishes particularly to stress the impact on children of the illegal traffic in small arms and light weapons, landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordinance. That is why my country co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 63/240, adopted in December 2008, establishing an open-ended working group to consider elements of a possible arms trade treaty.

With regard to the problem of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, Ecuador believes that allowing children to take up arms and enter the vortex of violence, confrontation and destruction is inhuman and contradicts the highest values of all societies. The progress that has been made in eliminating the recruitment of child soldiers is considerable, but there is still a long way to go and there are many challenges to face.

In such circumstances, the international community must give priority attention to the situation by applying more specific measures to guarantee the most fundamental rights of children and to mitigate and prevent the gravest effects of conflict and violence on children. Ecuador wishes to express its full support for all initiatives to take concrete measures against that scourge.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Uruguay.

**Mr. Cancela** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Mexico for convening this timely debate on civilians in armed conflict. Uruguay is pleased that the issue of children affected by armed conflict has been enjoying increasing priority on the international agenda, and will continue to support all efforts in that regard.

We welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Uruguay fully supports her work and mandate. Her substantive briefings, developed in a framework of broad consultations, allow us to assess progress to date and reaffirm our conviction that much work remains to be done.

Despite the achievements of recent years, the figures contained in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2009/158) on the impact of armed conflict on children are of particular concern. The issue is inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly, where my country has played an extremely active role year after year in strengthening and expanding the involvement and responsibility of that organ of universal membership with respect to an issue that falls within its mandate and is of concern to all.

Nevertheless, Uruguay recognizes the role that the Security Council has played, particularly through the adoption of numerous resolutions, the most recent of which — resolution 1612 (2005) — established a monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to receive reliable information and take specific action to put a halt to the illegal recruitment and use of children in conflict zones. With respect to resolution 1612 (2005), we believe that it is necessary to assess not only the implementation, but also the format of the mechanism. We remain concerned by the fact that, even when reports continue to highlight six types of grave violations against children, the mechanism is triggered only by the illegal recruitment and use of child soldiers.

In that regard, we reiterate our support for the recommendation that the mechanism's scope be extended, as we do not believe that certain violations are more serious than others. All must be accorded the same priority. We understand that extending the trigger would call for the careful discussion of each category within existing legal frameworks. We feel that a focus on step-by-step, progressive inclusion would be more practical and operative.

In that respect, we recognize the contribution of the International Criminal Court, which designates as war crimes sexual violence and the recruitment or enlisting of children under the age of 15 or their active use in armed conflict. We also appreciate the contributions of other international courts that have included the protection of children in their respective jurisdictions. We understand that it is critical to fight tirelessly against the impunity of those responsible for grave violations of children's rights, in clear contravention of relevant international norms. In that regard, we encourage the Security Council to refer such cases to the International Criminal Court.

My delegation believes that greater attention should be given to the reintegration into society of children who are linked to armed groups or victims of other grave violations of their rights, in particular sexual abuse or exploitation. We agree with the Special Representative on the critical importance of effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes to the well-being of all children affected by armed conflict. Such efforts should enjoy adequate human and financial resources and be community-based in order to facilitate the sustainable and successful reintegration of these children.

The social reintegration of children also requires the careful consideration of cases of minors accused of crimes committed during their association with armed forces or groups. We agree that, in such cases, children must be seen, first and foremost, as victims and dealt with in accordance with international legislation within the framework of a legal system for children that leads to their social rehabilitation.

We appreciate the work of civil society in conjunction with the entire United Nations system, including the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF child-protection advisers and the peace

mission personnel, in building sustainable mechanisms for child protection.

Uruguay, one of the 10 largest troop contributors, has demonstrated on the ground its unwavering commitment to the protection of the civilian population in general and of children in particular. In this sense, we support the recommendation to include specific provisions for the protection of children in all peacekeeping operations.

Our country has witnessed the successes and the difficulties of this project. Our troops have participated in successful programmes in coordination with the child protection advisers, but have also endured the difficulties in implementing mandates that, while sound on paper, do not have enough human and material resources in practice.

It is thus indispensable that Security Council mandates, when incorporating specific provisions to protect children, include the strategic and logistical measures needed to best fulfil these tasks. Uruguay once again stands ready to contribute to responding to this challenge through its experience on the ground.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Terzi** (Italy): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you personally and thank the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantallano, for her initiative and for that of the Mexican presidency of the Security Council to convene this open debate on children and armed conflicts and for chairing the Security Council's meeting today. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy and Ms. Veneman for their important statements today.

In taking the floor, I would like to subscribe to the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic in his capacity as the Presidency of the European Union.

The protection of children's rights during armed conflicts is one of Italy's top national priorities, as we indicated when we were elected to the Human Rights Council in 2007. During our 2007-2008 term on the Security Council, this same commitment inspired us to make an active contribution, proposing the insertion of child-protection provisions into United Nations mission mandates from Côte d'Ivoire to the Sudan and Afghanistan. We are glad that this proposal has now become standard practice, whenever a mandate is established or renewed by the Security Council.

I wish to pay tribute to Ambassador Ripert, the outgoing Chair of the Security Council Working Group, for the leadership and contribution that France has provided in pushing forward the United Nations agenda for children in armed conflicts. Let me also congratulate Ambassador Heller for taking over this task.

We have been moved by the testimony of Grace Akallo in the Council today. She is an example of resilience, and the account she made of the heroism of Sister Rachele witnesses to the fact that individual actions and strongly felt values can make a difference.

Italy welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and endorses its recommendations. In particular, we support the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the trigger for the Council's action to include sexual violence. The Security Council's adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), which we co-sponsored, acknowledges that, today, sexual violence is one of the primary threats to children in situations of armed conflict.

Placing this violation among the criteria for inclusion in the reports of the Secretary-General would be another major step forward in the Council's action against this appalling crime and a signal that the Council is listening to the voices of children who have been its victims.

We also share the report's emphasis on action plans, whose significant results have been the release and reintegration of child soldiers in countries where parties to conflicts have agreed to detailed and time-bound commitments.

The 83 child-protection advisers on United Nations missions perform essential duties. As a main contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, my country is ready to actively support United Nations action to strengthen the training of United Nations mission personnel in this area, and welcomes the efforts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to draft common guidelines. In the development of strategies for the protection of children, their participation is another priority. We must listen to their voices. To further encourage child participation and

protection, my Government has organized — together with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, and Save the Children — a high-level event in Rome in late June this year. The participants will include several former child soldiers and youth advocates from the Network of Young People Affected by War.

Impunity remains a major issue, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) has a key role to play. We recall that the very first arrest warrant the Court issued concerned the recruitment of child soldiers. The Security Council and its Working Group should look into ways to develop practical cooperation with the ICC in fighting impunity. The first step is for the Security Council to impose targeted measures on offenders, as contemplated by resolution 1612 (2005).

Given the role of the United Nations in addressing the plight of children in armed conflict, we believe there is an urgent need for the Security Council to start working on a new resolution that would allow us to incorporate the lessons learned and the developments ensuing from the approval of resolution 1612 (2005).

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to thank you for organizing this important debate.

My delegation takes due note of the Secretary-General's latest report on children and armed conflict. We believe the recommendations therein merit careful consideration and subsequent implementation and compliance by Member States and parties to conflicts.

We commend the Security Council and its Working Group for their continued efforts to end violations against children in armed conflict. These initiatives have yielded significant and tangible successes. Several listed parties to armed conflict have adopted action plans to end their recruitment or use of child soldiers. Some have ended the practice. Others are engaged in active dialogue with United Nations, with the aim of being de-listed.

It is encouraging that the Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations of children's rights has been established in all the situations of armed conflict listed in both the annexes to the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). The United Nations system-wide response to this issue is also laudable. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, deserves our particular praise for her dedicated efforts in this regard.

The context of armed conflict has changed dramatically over the years. Diverse forms of political and armed violence have presented new threats to the protection of children. These emerging concerns necessitate prioritized and specific actions, as well as a visionary and forward-looking approach.

As society breaks down during conflict, many children perceive armed groups as their best chance for survival. While some are coerced, some join armed groups to escape poverty, while others do so out of desperation to avenge the killing of family members. Therefore, success in ending children's involvement in armed conflicts ultimately depends on addressing the root causes of motivation and on building societies where the rights and dignity of all children are upheld.

Despite all the successes, the pace of progress is still slow and its impact is not yet felt by the tens of thousands of children in the ranks of fighting forces. While progress has been made through action plans to release child soldiers in several situations of concern, the overall situation of children in armed conflict remains grave. Peace remains the main hope for securing the release of child soldiers from armed forces and groups. While we appreciate the gradual expansion of child protection provisions in the peacekeeping missions, we would therefore like to see such provisions made an integral part of the mandate of all ongoing and future peacekeeping and political missions. The Peacebuilding Commission has to ensure that children's protection, demobilization and reintegration needs are addressed in the initial planning and implementation of peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

We are of the view that the Security Council's current framework to protect children from armed conflicts should give equal consideration to all six mandated grave violations. The application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism should also be expanded to include all situations of concern identified in both annexes of the Secretary-General's report. A thorough evaluation of the action plans and of the monitoring and reporting mechanism would be helpful to ensure their effectiveness.

Some kind of enforcement criteria could be contemplated to make parties listed in the annexes, particularly the persistent violators, comply fully with the action plans in a time-bound manner. The issues of children under foreign occupation need to be appropriately addressed. Dialogue with all parties to conflict, including non-State actors, is crucial to developing a workable action plan. We encourage the Working Group to utilize the full range of actions identified in its toolkit. The increasing time lag between considering reports and issuing conclusions, however, needs to be addressed.

Member States have to put in place durable protection mechanisms to prevent child recruitment and other abuses against children at the national and local levels. At the same time, national and international justice systems have to take stronger action to end impunity for crimes against children within their jurisdictions.

We have a rich body indeed of international instruments for the protection of children in armed conflict, but the task ahead is also uphill. Our challenge is to ensure that this framework is used to maximum effect. This will require well-coordinated and multipronged actions by a wide range of actors, and sustained funding to rehabilitate and reintegrate returning child soldiers and other war-affected children into society. We would urge the Security Council to build on the gains achieved so far and address the existing gaps in the current system. To secure a better future for the world, we have to protect our posterity from the scourges of war and armed conflict. We simply cannot afford to be slacking in our endeavour.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

**Mr. Yankey** (Ghana): I wish to commend the delegation of Mexico for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict during your presidency, Sir. I welcome the opportunity to participate in this meeting.

Ghana will continue to support the Security Council's efforts to protect children in situations of armed conflict, be they combatants or displaced, orphans or victims of sexual violence. We believe that the dehumanization and brutalization of such children do not augur well for the long-term stability and advancement of society in general. In this connection, we are grateful to the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their statements this morning. We applaud them for their determined efforts to achieve the objectives outlined in resolution 1612 (2005).

To Ms. Grace Akallo, we wish to express our admiration for her courage. Her dramatic personal testimony put a human face on a tragedy that often seems remote, but is in fact closer to us in many ways that might not be apparent. We also extend a hand of solidarity to countless other unlucky child victims who are caught up in the whirlwinds of violence and destabilization all over the world, and particularly in Africa.

Ghana welcomes the substantial progress that has been made in developing strategies and mechanisms to curb the abuse and exploitation of children in conflict situations. The monitoring and reporting mechanisms that are now in place have facilitated the exposure of grave violations of the rights of children in those unfortunate circumstances. We trust that the Security Council will respond appropriately.

Despite the substantial gains that have been reported, formidable problems persist. The recruitment, abuse, torture and exploitation of children are still commonplace among armed groups. We strongly condemn the perpetration of widespread and systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, which have become the ugly characteristics of several ongoing conflicts. The rampant impunity with which these crimes are committed has emboldened the perpetrators to defy the authority of the Security Council and the will of the international community. Consequently, Ghana endorses the call by the Secretary-General for the expansion of the monitoring and reporting mechanism trigger to include rape and other grave forms of sexual violence.

As we consider the next constructive steps forward, we wish to highlight, among others, the following points.

There is a need for increased focus on prevention to ensure that children are protected against current and future recruitment and exploitation as soldiers. We call for legal safeguards to prohibit children under the age of 18 from being deployed in armed conflict. The root causes of recruitment invariably lie in poor governance and its effects, including human rights abuses, which

create a fertile ground for child recruitment. Related to this are the cultural and economic factors that encourage child recruitment.

The demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers remains a significant challenge, especially where gainful employment is not easily available. This brings to the fore the issue of development, especially in the health and education sectors. Comprehensive donor support for the demobilization efforts of affected Governments is thus imperative, if the incidence of the recycling of child soldiers within conflict areas is to be curbed. Existing international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, contain much of what is required to offer adequate protection to children. Those instruments need to be supplemented with vigorous implementation of existing mandates.

In conclusion, further efforts and better coordinated actions are needed to advance this process, which started a decade ago, to eliminate the recruitment and exploitation of child soldiers. Such efforts must take into account new and appalling trends, including such atrocities as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Frommelt** (Liechtenstein): We thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important and timely debate. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team for their dedicated work.

The increasingly dire humanitarian situation in northern Sri Lanka is alarming. Civilians, including many children, are trapped in the conflict zone. Liechtenstein calls on both of the parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and to facilitate unhindered access to those facing life-threatening shortages of food, water and medical supplies.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism on serious violations of the rights of the child and the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict have brought about tangible progress in advancing the protection of children affected by armed conflicts. The decision to de-list various situations from the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General demonstrates that the mechanism established by resolution 1612 (2005) has already had a positive effect on the ground. Taking into account the recent progress made in the various areas of civilian protection, in particular with regard to resolution 1820 (2008), we believe it is time to acknowledge the clear linkage between resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1612 (2005) and to further develop both agendas in a holistic manner.

In accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), the monitoring and reporting mechanism provides reliable information on the situations listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of grave sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, the abduction of children, the denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and hospitals. However, only one out of those six grave violations — the recruitment and use of child soldiers — currently triggers the inclusion of countries in the agenda of the Security Council, in annex I of the Secretary-General's report. We believe that the protection of children could be significantly enhanced if a new resolution were to expand the criteria triggering the mechanism to include all six grave violations against children.

While acknowledging the equal weight of all grave violations, we believe that the expansion would best be done step by step, beginning with sexual violence, as the most pressing issue. With a view to further strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism, we welcome the information provided by non-governmental organizations and call for the inclusion of child-protection advisers in all peacekeeping missions and, where appropriate, political missions. In order to prepare and develop an action plan that will lead to de-listing, the States concerned should allow direct contacts between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and relevant non-State actors.

The fight against impunity is an essential part of our efforts to improve the safety and security of these children. Holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes has already proved to have a deterrent effect. While it needs to be emphasized that such

accountability should take place in national judiciaries, the Security Council must also be mindful of its competence to refer to the International Criminal Court, for investigation and prosecution, violations of children's rights falling within the Court's jurisdiction. Any measures taken by the Working Group in response to grave violations of children's rights must be complemented by effective enforcement mechanisms and measures, such as sanctions, arms embargoes and bans on military assistance, as well as the imposition of travel restrictions.

As a member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, Liechtenstein will continue to be active in this context. We hope that this open debate will serve as a crucial step towards a new resolution that will expand the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Peru.

**Mr. Chávez** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative to convene this open debate on a topic to which my country attaches great importance: the participation of children in armed conflicts. We particularly thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Mr. Le Roy and Ms. Veneman for their briefings and for the valuable information provided. We also thank Ms. Grace Akallo for her brave testimony, which strengthens our conviction that armed conflict is a circumstance in which children require redoubled and concerted attention.

In that respect, my country believes, as the Secretary-General indicates in his recommendations, that the Security Council should accord equal attention to all children affected by armed conflict, wherever it may occur. Under no circumstances is the abduction, recruitment for criminal purposes, sexual violation, mutilation or death of children acceptable; neither are attacks against schools or camps for refugees or displaced persons.

Peru reiterates its condemnation of all acts of violence, in particular the intentional and repeated sexual violation and rape of minors, especially girls, as weapons of war for parties to armed conflict. The Security Council should consider the Secretary-General's request that parties committing acts of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict be included in the annexes to his report.

Likewise, it is essential that resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008) be mutually reinforcing in order to prevent and combat sexual violence in conflict situations. Mechanisms permitting United Nations agencies to exchange reliable information on acts of sexual violence in order to reduce and combat that scourge should also be explored. For its part, the Security Council should continue using or expanding its use of the instruments and means at its disposal to stop violations of children's rights in conflict situations.

Resolution 1612 (2005), together with all previous resolutions on this subject, has provided a formal and detailed framework for promoting the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as well as key elements aimed at ensuring respect for children's rights on the ground. Peru calls on the parties to armed conflicts to commit themselves to respecting children's rights.

At the same time, we must continue the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), particularly when it comes to formulating specific action plans with precise timetables to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. In that respect, we should consider new modalities for cooperation among the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, sanctions committees and groups of experts in order to take the measures necessary to ensure the safety of children. In addition, the Security Council should continue taking specific measures to protect children in peacekeeping operations and political missions.

As rightly indicated in the Secretary-General's report, given the regional dimension of many conflicts, field-deployed operations can help establish coordination mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection. Member States, especially those affected by armed conflict, must also, within the framework of their legal systems, continue to implement or adopt measures to identify those responsible for the illegal recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and other grave violations of children's rights, and apply the necessary sanctions. Neither amnesty nor impunity is acceptable.

The establishment of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is proof of the Security Council's increasing commitment to protecting children. I must highlight the successful work done by France as chairman of the Working Group, and I can

assure Mexico of our support in its work as the new Chairman.

It is also appropriate to highlight the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Since field visits are an essential part of the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), it is only right for her Office to have the necessary logistic and budgetary support to fully perform its functions. The same can be said of the important work carried out by UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant bodies in this area. We call on States and all parties to conflicts to cooperate with these bodies. We also call on the donor community to support the efforts to reintegrate and demobilize child soldiers being made in some countries.

The progressive development of international humanitarian law has provided us with the legal instruments needed to fight against the use of children in armed conflict, protect them and ensure their security in times of violence. States and the international community therefore have the great responsibility of ensuring that this is done. Not only do current peace and stability depend on compliance, but so does the building of peaceful, stable societies in the future.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

**Mr. Paudel** (Nepal): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict. We are confident that this debate will assess the magnitude of the problem from wider perspectives and help consolidate international cooperation for the implementation of our shared commitments.

We appreciate the thoughtful statement by the Secretary-General in the Council this morning. We also appreciate the presentations by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her role in this issue. We commend Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman for their presentations. We were very much moved by the descriptions of Ms. Grace Akallo on the plight of child soldiers.

The international community has rightfully been devoting its attention to the issue of children and armed conflict for several years. In addition to the generic conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there are other international instruments, commitments and principles devised to protect the rights of the child. In line with that, we appreciate the initiatives of the Security Council in adopting various resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), for the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

Children are the most vulnerable sector of the population in times of conflict. They are easily used and abused, as they are incapable of judging what is right and wrong for themselves. Governments, the international community and civil society must come up with rapid, effective and coordinated efforts to prevent heinous crimes against children during conflict. To that end, our great commitments must be matched with adequate human and financial resources on the ground to monitor the situation, rescue the victims and bring the violators to justice.

There is a clear need for time-bound and tailor-made action plans for rescuing the victims and for their reintegration into their family and society in the aftermath of conflict. We clearly see the need for a comprehensive approach linked with overall development policies for the sustained promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, Nepal has travelled quite a distance in its historic political transformation. For the first time, people are writing their Constitution, through their elected representatives in the Constituent Assembly. Writing a new Constitution and guiding the peace process to its logical conclusion are the two fundamental tasks ahead of this Government. The Government of Nepal is committed to fulfilling these historic responsibilities with the consensus of political parties and stakeholders.

Nepal, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has devised the necessary legal instruments and established a legal and administrative framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The Government of Nepal reiterates its commitment to releasing combatants who are minors, ending impunity for crimes against children and protecting children from sexual violence and other grave crimes against them, in the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as children are the

foundation of the peaceful and prosperous future of our country.

The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction has taken the lead role in the release, reintegration and rehabilitation of combatants who are minors on the basis of the broad consensus of the Army Integration Special Committee and its Technical Committee. To this end, the Government of Nepal would welcome cooperation from United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Mission in Nepal, for the early release and reintegration of combatants who are minors.

Allow me to share with the Council the fact that the Government of Nepal has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) in an overall positive manner and expresses its readiness to work in collaboration with the international community. The Government of Nepal is determined to carry out its responsibilities in the protection and promotion of children affected by armed conflict, in line with resolution 1612 (2005).

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

**Mr. Ney** (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Allow me to start by wishing you, Mr. President, all the best in your new function as the Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. My particular thanks also goes to France, as the outgoing chair, for its important and crucial contribution during the first formative years of the Working Group.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for their dedicated engagement in taking this important issue forward. Finally, allow me to thank the staff of UNICEF and all other United Nations agencies participating in the monitoring and reporting mechanism for their valuable contributions.

Germany attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and, in particular, to the situation of children in armed conflict. I am proud to say that Germany is one of the main donors in this field, both bilaterally and multilaterally. We welcome the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and fully endorse the recommendations contained therein. At the same time, we are acutely aware that the United Nations child protection framework for children in armed conflict needs further strengthening.

The international community has come a long way in dealing with the issue of the protection of children in armed conflicts since it was first included on the agenda of the Security Council in 1998. Resolution 1612 (2005) is rightfully regarded as a milestone, as it created an effective international monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and armed conflict and a Working Group to provide follow-up to those reports.

Progress so far shows that the mechanism is working. It provides Member States with evidence of grave violations being committed against children in armed conflict, in particular concerning the illegal recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

At the same time, the naming and shaming of perpetrators in the reports of the Secretary-General seems to have a real impact on the ground, as some parties to conflict enter into dialogue with United Nations country-level task forces or even adopt and implement time-bound action plans to address the grave violations for which they have been cited. This is no small achievement, given that these violations are often perpetrated in a rule of law vacuum.

However, in our view, the impact of the United Nations child protection framework on the ground in situations of armed conflict is not as decisive as it could and should be. Important challenges remain. The international community must not watch and keep silent in the face of deteriorating conflict situations, like the one we are currently witnessing in Sri Lanka, affecting children in particular. An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is imperative in Sri Lanka to allow for a United Nations-assisted evacuation of those still trapped in the conflict zone, among them many children.

Let me highlight three points to address the challenges that I have mentioned. First, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children remain widespread in many armed conflicts and are exacerbated by a culture of impunity. Germany therefore welcomes and fully endorses the proposal made by the Secretary-General to expand the so-called trigger for the listing of perpetrators in the annex of the

annual report to also include cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in armed conflict. In that regard, Germany calls upon the Security Council to take appropriate steps as a matter of urgency. Synergies with other protection agendas, especially on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict, as set forth in Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), should be realized, for example with regard to data sharing.

Secondly, in our view, it is essential that the threat of forceful Security Council follow-up to reported violations against children remain credible. Regrettably, 19 of the approximately 60 armed groups listed by the Secretary-General in this year's report are persistent perpetrators which have been repeatedly listed for at least four years. We call upon the Security Council to consider strong and urgent measures, including targeted sanctions or referrals to the International Criminal Court where appropriate, against those parties that persistently ignore calls by the Security Council Working Group to cease their illegal practices with regard to children in armed conflict. What we need is more systematic communication between the Security Council Working Group and the relevant sanctions committees.

And thirdly, the Security Council should remain fully engaged in mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict into all United Nations peacekeeping and political operations. In that regard, we welcome the deployment of an increasing number of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and the conceptual work on a policy directive in this field currently being finalized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Let me conclude by reiterating our full support for the analysis and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General and our firm commitment to join hands with all those striving to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict worldwide.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mexico on its productive presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and to express our satisfaction in seeing Mexico follow France as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Morocco, along with the rest of the international community, expresses its thanks for the laudable efforts of the Mexican authorities in responding to the current influenza challenge from its onset. Morocco expresses its solidarity with the people and Government of Mexico in confronting this pandemic challenge.

(*spoke in French*)

Let me also thank you, Sir, for organizing the debate, the importance of which was marvellously illustrated by the poignant and moving testimony of Ms. Grace Akallo.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for the quality of his report (S/2009/158) and the strength of his commitment. Our thanks go as well to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their efforts to protect children.

Statistics are implacable: more than 2 million children dead, 6 million disabled and 22 million displaced. When they are not reduced to the status of sex slaves or indoctrinated refugees, young boys and girls whose fundamental rights are being violated for the sake of war are living through atrocities and are completely deprived of the real meaning of childhood. We all vividly recall the suffering endured by the children of Gaza, who are confronted by the logic of war, with all its consequences on their psychological state and their daily lives.

The experiences of terror and deprivation to which children are subjected in conflict situations — where children are systematically recruited by armed groups and where they are killed, maimed, abducted and subjected to violence — are shocking. That is why the Council's increasing attention to children's issues is entirely justified. The specific resolutions on the subject adopted by the Council in the past 10 years, which have given rise to the establishment of important mechanisms, have certainly made significant progress possible. That progress includes the creation of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, the implementation of specific action plans and the total or partial release of children associated with armed groups in specific situations.

Still, it must be recognized that progress remains limited. Thus, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, have a necessary role to play in promoting national measures aimed at strengthening

the protection of children and effective implementation of demobilization and reintegration programmes and the establishment of socio-economic conditions that discourage recruitment.

There is no disagreement that the responsibility for putting an end to child recruitment lies first and foremost with States. However, specialized institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization and UNICEF must strengthen their initiatives and coordinate their actions with the Working Group, so as to define a strategy to help those countries resolve their problems. The approach must be preventive as well as responsive in addressing the tragic consequences of conflicts. Attacking the root causes of armed conflict is vital in order to prevent all involvement of children.

Morocco is a party to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and is prepared to associate itself with all international efforts to curb the terrible tragedy of the involvement of children in armed conflict.

In that spirit, my country reiterates its support for the Paris Principles, which are aimed at protecting children against illegal recruitment in armed conflict and affording them appropriate reintegration in a protective environment. We hope that the Paris commitments will enable us to advance towards a more inclusive approach, agreed upon by the international community, on the importance of education programmes for the prevention of recruitment, so that all child soldiers can benefit from suitable reintegration and rehabilitation programmes. The commitment of Governments is essential to implement the Paris Principles for the protection of children in armed conflict situations and to achieve the final and unconditional release of child soldiers before the conclusion of peace agreements.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

**Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, allow me, Mr. President, to express our solidarity with the Government and people of Mexico on account of the outbreak of influenza that has taken so many lives and has affected not only your country but others on the planet. We feel solidarity with Mexicans.

We also thank Mexico, in exercising the presidency of the Council during the present month, for having convened us to discuss children and armed conflict. We are pleased to have had the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, with us. That highlights not only the importance that Mexico attributes to the matter, but also its active commitment to advance the fight against the many atrocities committed against boys and girls in situations of conflict. We also appreciate the report on this matter presented to us by the Secretariat.

Almost twenty years have transpired since the Council first took notice of the fate of children in areas of conflict, and ten years since resolution 1261 (1999) was adopted — the Council's first resolution dealing with children and armed conflict. The results since the adoption of that resolution, which was followed by six others in the intervening years, have been decidedly mixed. In spite of some progress achieved — thanks in great part to the initiatives taken by the United Nations — we have also been witness to changes in the tactics of war by which the civilian population has become even more exposed to a spiral of violence and to new threats to boys and, especially, girls.

We believe that the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) in July of 2005 was an important achievement in offering a conceptual framework that helps strengthen the protection of children who are victims of conflicts. In particular, we must devote all our attention to the social disintegration caused by gender-based violence and displacements, as well as the brutal violence and sexual slavery to which girls are subjected, and to the resulting stigmatization in their communities.

Guatemala has actively participated, in the framework of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, in the matter related to the progress made in including questions regarding children and armed conflict in United Nations political missions and peacekeeping operations. We hope that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will finalize its policy directive on mainstreaming the protection of children affected by armed conflicts in peacekeeping activities, as requested by the Special Committee since 2008. This policy will also provide directions on the role and functions of child protection advisers and will outline the policy framework for their activities, further defining their cooperation, coordination and

consultation with other key child protection actors in the field.

We support the recommendation that, when appropriate, specific child protection provisions should be included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the deployment, on a case-by-case basis, of child protection advisers should be foreseen in those operations. However, we believe that the Department must more precisely define the role and responsibilities of these advisers and strengthen the mechanisms and oversight arrangements to curb sexual violence, as well as outline clear modalities for cooperation with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

We praise the designation of a coordinator or focal point to liaise with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, within their respective mandates. However, we reiterate our concern about the delay in the appointment of a person to assume that latter post.

My delegation would like to stress the importance of training on child protection matters for peacekeeping contingents in the field, since the effectiveness of our work is measured in the timely execution of programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of boys and girls in their communities or in the society. Those programmes must receive more resources so that they become sustainable in the long term.

Finally, I would like to refer to children accused of illicit activities carried out during their affiliation with armed forces or groups. They should be treated as victims, in accordance with international law, in the context of restitution and rehabilitative justice.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I next give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Ayoob** (Afghanistan): As Ambassador Tanin is in Havana to lead the Afghan delegation at the Ministerial Meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I have the honour to participate in this meeting and to deliver, on his behalf and on behalf of the delegation of Afghanistan, a statement on the subject under the Council's consideration, a subject that is very important for my country.

We thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important debate to discuss the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and for chairing of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The presence of Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mexico at our meeting this morning reflects the level of the commitment of your delegation and the effectiveness of its work on this issue.

We welcome Mrs. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and thank her for her insightful briefing this morning. We also commend her Office for its continuing efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict. We welcome the recent establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in Afghanistan.

My delegation was deeply touched by the testimony this morning of Grace Akallo, who spoke as a former child soldier. We sincerely commend her courage and strength.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. In November 2008, the Secretary-General's country-specific report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan provided us with an initial opportunity to carry out fruitful discussion with our partners in the Security Council Working Group on ways and means to better implement resolution 1612 (2005) in the challenging environment of Afghanistan.

For this debate to continue effectively, we must recognize two facts: that the chief threat to children in Afghanistan is terrorism, and that to overcome that threat the international community and the Government of Afghanistan must work together.

First, terrorism drastically affects the daily lives of our people, particularly children. The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan is the product of the surge of terrorist activities carried out by Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other associated terrorist and armed groups. It is the Taliban and other terrorist groups that have been and remain the main violators of human rights, including children's rights, in Afghanistan, and those violations will continue as long as the security situation does not improve.

Terrorists have increased attacks in our territory, employing barbaric methods imported from outside

Afghanistan, including the use of car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices. These attacks deliberately target heavily populated areas, where children are the prime victims. Terrorists are recruiting, training and exploiting children as combatants and sending them to operate as suicide bombers. The intensification of the Taliban intimidation campaign, accomplished through the burning of schools, the destruction of health care centres and clinics and attacks on female teachers and schoolchildren, has created an atmosphere of terror which prevents our children from accessing basic Government services. The recent acid attack on a group of schoolgirls was a horrific demonstration of the particular vulnerability of girls.

The reported cases of alleged recruitment, detention and sexual violence by individuals in the Afghan Government or the National Army and Police are disturbing to us, but they are isolated cases. For its part, the Government of Afghanistan is deeply committed to fully implementing resolution 1612 (2005) and to protecting the rights of children through all possible means and mechanisms.

Afghanistan has developed domestic laws relating to children, established juvenile judicial institutions and ratified most of the international human rights treaties including, in 2002, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Our penal code prohibits sexual violence against children and prohibits the recruitment of persons below 18 in our National Police and below 22 in our National Army. According to our juvenile code, the legal age of criminal responsibility for a child is 12 years of age; children can be prosecuted and sentenced only by a juvenile court and can be confined only in a juvenile detention centre. Afghan national legislation, particularly a recent law on combating terrorist offences, strictly prohibits the detention of children in adult prisons even if a child is accused of terrorism or threats to national security.

We recognize the importance of governance and the rule of law to improving and better implementing all those legal provisions. We are making the necessary efforts in that direction; all those efforts need sustained international involvement.

In conclusion, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the international community for the military and civilian personnel serving in Afghanistan, who are assisting us in ensuring security and enabling the implementation of the rule of law, good governance and human rights, including children's rights. We are grateful for their sacrifices in our common endeavour to preserve peace and security, for their efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan people and for their recent efforts to address, with us, the issue of civilian casualties. We must continue to move together to stop terrorism's menace to civilians, in particular children.

Afghanistan has made substantial progress in ensuring the rights of children through legal frameworks and other mechanisms. However, terrorism continues to threaten the attainment of our goals. It is our hope that, with the continuing help and focus of the international community and the ongoing determination of the Afghan Government, we can improve the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and protect our children, as the hope for our future, to the best of our ability.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

**Mr. Argüello** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina, at the outset, would like to thank the delegation of Mexico, which holds the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, for its initiative in organizing today's debate. We congratulate the Mexican delegation on its efforts as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Our thanks go to those who addressed the Security Council this morning. In particular, we listened carefully to the statement of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for which we are most grateful. And we cannot fail to thank Ms. Grace Akallo for sharing her perspective and her experience as a former child soldier.

It is our understanding that the issue of the protection of children, in all its aspects, falls primarily within the purview of the General Assembly. In that regard, we shall continue to work to strengthen the mandates of existing mechanisms and to search for new institutional solutions. We also view most positively the progress made in the protection of children affected by armed conflict since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). This progress has been achieved through the joint endeavours of States and the mechanisms created by the United Nations system,

with the invaluable support of civil society organizations.

We appreciate the action taken by a number of national Governments, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). This includes their commitment to action plans agreed upon by parties to a conflict, consistent with resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) and with international law. But a source of great concern is the widespread persistence of the abhorrent practice of recruiting child soldiers, including in cases of inadequate supervision of official practice meant to ensure that young recruits are of legal age, and of manipulating child soldiers in the context of peace negotiations.

We are also alarmed by the upsurge of violence of all kinds, including attacks that impede the exercise of the right to education and numerous recorded cases of sexual violence in a context of insecurity and impunity.

Argentina attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Every State has the imperative obligation to ensure that its inhabitants fully enjoy human rights, even under the most difficult circumstances. In that regard, we are grateful for the recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General, which we shall study carefully. In addition to what we have said in previous debates on this item, we wish today to underscore our agreement on a number of points.

First of all, the fight against impunity and the quest for justice are at the core of any effective response aimed at preventing and eliminating human rights violations in any situation. It is therefore indispensable to make greater efforts to end impunity, including in cases of systematic and generalized sexual violence. It is imperative to ensure due process and recourse for the victims to adequate legal remedies, including the International Criminal Court, where applicable.

Secondly, we have listened closely to the statements of the representative of Costa Rica and other delegations, and we agree with what they said. We consider that the deliberations of the Security Council Working Group should be extended to all situations of armed conflict, where there is proof not solely of the recruitment and use of child soldiers but of any of the other five categories of grave violations, including rape and other serious sexual violence. We believe it relevant to review the criteria for inclusion in the annexes, taking all forms of violence into consideration.

Thirdly, the action plans agreed upon have proven to be a valuable tool, and we encourage the Security Council to continue urging parties to armed conflict situations to prepare and put into practice concrete action plans with definite time frames in order to end the illegal recruitment and use of children, as well as to undertake concrete commitments regarding other types of alleged violations and abuses.

Fourthly, we are convinced of the need to carry out effective programmes of demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation so that victims have a real opportunity to be reintegrated into society. For this purpose, these programmes must have sufficient funding and pragmatic and effective mechanisms to achieve sustainable results over time. We believe that that is an indispensable component for peacebuilding that must receive appropriate political attention in all relevant forums, including the Peacebuilding Commission.

In line with what I said earlier, we would like to stress the importance of the programmes initiated by some Governments with the support of the United Nations and the international community to ensure appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been released or who have managed to leave armed groups.

Argentina reiterates its unshakeable commitment to the protection of children from all forms of violence and to continued cooperation with the Working Group and all mechanisms contributing to the promotion and protection of the rights of children in order to secure for them the potential for a childhood free from violence where their human rights can be fully enjoyed.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

**Mr. Maurer** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, we thank you for having organized this debate today. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and thank Ms. Coomaraswamy and all other representatives of the Secretariat for their excellent work. My written text is the official text of my statement, but I would like to focus my abridged oral presentation on just a few points.

We all know that in spite of the marked interest and action by the international community, violations of law and abuses continue. A very recent example is the desperate situation of thousands of children trapped in the conflict zone in north-eastern Sri Lanka. Credible reports indicate that several hundred children have been massacred and that a number of hospitals have been targeted for attacks during the fighting of the past few months. The situation is even more worrisome because humanitarian access to these children trapped in the war zones is still severely restricted. Additionally, it has been reported that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have intensified their use of child soldiers. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group should use every available opportunity to engage the parties to the conflict so that they will improve the situation on the ground.

This situation should not let us forget other serious situations, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan, Somalia and other hotbeds of tension and crisis.

Generally, we call on the Security Council to use all its influence to ensure implementation of the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005), to include this question on the Council's agenda and to make better use of existing mechanisms and instruments, such as sanctions, peacekeeping missions, political missions and statements and resolutions.

We fully endorse all the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report and stress the following points. First, we support the idea of expanding the criteria that trigger the inclusion of parties to armed conflict in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General. This could be carried out using an incremental approach, starting with the intentional killing and maiming of children and concluding with all six grave violations.

Secondly, we support the idea that all parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports should prepare and implement concrete action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. The Council should take measures against any party that does not comply with its obligations.

Thirdly, the Working Group should be encouraged to report to the competent sanctions committees those parties to conflict committing repeated grave violations against children. Moreover, targeted measures should be taken against parties or individuals responsible for such violations.

Fourthly, we encourage the Security Council to defer to the International Criminal Court when appropriate regarding violations committed against children that fall within its jurisdiction.

Finally, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should receive more significant administrative support and should improve its methods of work.

The question of children and armed conflict is only one facet of the protection agenda on which the Security Council, the Secretariat, the operational system of the United Nations and all Member States should focus. Still, it is vital to monitor the implementation of decisions on the ground, including their impact on the populations concerned. Accordingly, it is imperative that, through our work at Headquarters, we develop mandates, including the terms of engagement of United Nations missions, in order to facilitate protection activities, ensure that recommendations coming from thematic debates are reflected in work on specific countries, support as much as possible protection on the ground in terms of human and financial resources, build capacity and conduct leading to good management of key dilemmas, and ensure that all stakeholders on the ground work in close cooperation on the basis of a common framework.

There are a number of financial mechanisms to support United Nations protection activities: the peacekeeping budget; the regular budget, including special political missions; the budgets of relevant United Nations agencies; and the Central Emergency Response Fund; and various other funds financed through voluntary contributions. This variety of mechanisms represents a challenge in terms of the effectiveness of planning and the strategic use of resources.

The lack of a broad view of transparency or predictability in resources is an obstacle to the effectiveness of protection activities. It is the responsibility of all of us to find appropriate solutions to resolve this problem. A common framework would contribute to improving the current situation.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Mr. Barbalić** (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Mr. President, I would like to express our thanks to you for having taken the initiative to convene this open debate on children and armed conflict. This is an issue to which Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches the highest importance.

Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of the Czech Republic speaking on behalf of the European Union.

As has been described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158), the overall situation of children affected by armed conflicts continues to be of serious concern. Children continue to suffer from the horrors of war. Recruitment by armed groups and widespread violence, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and other grave crimes in war-affected countries, is daily life for thousands of children. Children also suffer from the indirect impact of war, such as the loss of their families and homes, hunger and various diseases.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that addressing the root causes of conflicts and adopting a comprehensive strategy, with the participation of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, such as UNICEF, regional organizations, the parties concerned and non-governmental organizations, could lead to the development of more effective tools in fighting all forms of violence against children. Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict is an important body and should take more serious steps vis-à-vis all parties involved to put an end to child recruitment and to the serious violations against children. It would be more effective if the Working Group worked closely with existing sanctions committees.

The protection of children under the provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law should be carried out under the scrutiny of the States parties to the respective conventions, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and the obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1977 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. In that regard, States parties should adopt appropriate measures at the national and international levels for the prevention of the recruitment of children and for their protection from all forms of violence. In that regard, as a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, adopted in May 2000, we join others in calling upon those countries that have not done so to accede to the Protocol.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a State party to the Rome Statute, considers that the International Criminal Court is an adequate and indispensable legal body that can take appropriate steps to investigate and prosecute crimes perpetrated against children that fall within its jurisdiction. It is the only accessible way to put an end to impunity and to prevent crimes in those cases where the judiciary system at the national level is not able to do so.

With regard to child protection advisers, their reports from the field are an indispensable tool for obtaining a comprehensive assessment that will help to learn lessons and to find the most effective solutions. Deployment of child protection advisers should be considered during the preparation of each peacekeeping operation and political mission, respectively. I would like to stress that the participation of child protection advisers in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is of the highest importance.

The Secretary-General's report recounts disturbing incidents affecting the education sector. Armed conflict is distorting education in a number of countries around the world, and children who are deprived of their right to education also remain deprived of their right to a better future.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that this open debate will contribute to the deliberations of Security Council.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

**Mr. Grauls** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate. It shows the special interest that Mexico attaches to the issue of children in armed conflicts, as does your greatly appreciated chairing of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/158), as well as the Special Representative, Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Le Roy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, for their

briefings. I would particularly like to say how much we appreciated Grace Akallo's very poignant testimony this morning.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement that my Czech colleague delivered on behalf of the European Union. On behalf of Belgium, I would like to highlight three elements for today's debate and then to share some thoughts as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on the Central African Republic.

First of all, Belgium fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to broaden and strengthen the mechanism of resolution 1612 (2005) so as also to include in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General parties in conflicts responsible for systematic sexual violence. The scourge of sexual violence is well known. The Council, through resolution 1820 (2008), has recognized that such violence, in some conflicts, is used as a weapon of war. We believe that broadening the mechanism should, first and foremost, take into consideration the criteria of sexual violence, without however prejudicing additional future broadening. That would serve as a significant step towards eradicating that most hateful violence.

Secondly, during its recent mandate in the Council, Belgium consistently emphasized the fight against impunity, whether through national or international mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court. Today, that Court is the appropriate legal instrument for prosecuting those suspected of having committed the gravest crimes, in particular against children. I wish to recall that the Court is an adjunct to national criminal justice systems and that it is first and foremost up to those jurisdictions to act. The fight against impunity is a fundamental element for reconciliation and peace, without which children will remain the victims of serious violations. We therefore support the plea of the Secretary-General to extend the action and responsibility of the Security Council and of its sanctions regimes in order to adopt appropriate sanctions against individuals or groups that persist in recruiting and using children.

Thirdly, Belgium would like to underscore the critical importance of reintegration programmes for former child soldiers. My country therefore fully subscribed to the Paris Principles in 2007. The principal message of those guiding principles is that preventing the recruitment of child soldiers and facilitating their reintegration must be envisaged over the long term, that is through programmes spread over several years. In that regard, the international community, together with national authorities, must fulfil their responsibilities.

That prompts me to say that the issue on our agenda today exceeds the scope of the Security Council. The Peacebuilding Commission also has a very important role to play, in particular in coordinating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and in sensitizing public opinion on the issue of child soldiers. I would like here to refer to the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which, together with the Government of that country, has recently renewed commitments to the issue in its strategy to build peace. The Central African Republic Government now needs to ratify and to incorporate into law the relevant international conventions and protocols to prevent recruitment, but also to protect and re-integrate released children. The Central African Republic configuration is committed to heightening the awareness of national parties and international partners in order to launch appropriate programmes and mobilize long-term financial support for the children concerned.

In the process of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups, UNICEF is currently implementing a demobilization programme for child soldiers, which, under the agreement with one of the rebel groups, the Armeé Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie, should soon lead to the demobilization of 105 children. The Central African Republic configuration ensures coordination between those efforts and other disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Finally, I would like to thank the Special Representative, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her consistent and resolute action for children in conflicts. Belgium particularly appreciates her field visits, such as recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in the Central African Republic. Her presence has a real impact on the attitude of the parties to the conflict and undoubtedly contributes to stemming the suffering of children in conflicts. We greatly admire her strong ongoing commitment for the cause of children in areas of conflict.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of El Salvador.

**Mrs. Gallardo Hernández** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on having convened this open Council debate to consider the issue of children and armed conflict. It is undoubtedly a highly sensitive and very interesting topic for the international community, in particular for a country such as El Salvador, which has experienced conflict. Indeed, it is so because of its cross-cutting implications and because of the moral and political challenges that it entails in the area of peace and security. It is also important in terms of respecting and promoting the human rights of children and adolescents, relevant international law and post-conflict peacebuilding processes.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General regarding the approach and the recommendations set out in his eighth report on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158).

El Salvador attaches great importance to the issue of children and armed conflict as a matter of principle firmly established in international law related to the rights and the protection of children in armed conflicts, including, among other instruments to which my country is a State party, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Likewise, as a post-conflict country, El Salvador recognizes the great value of the international community's efforts to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts and other grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict.

In that context, our country considers it essential to continue to make progress in implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism, in submitting action plans to stop the recruitment and use of children, and in mainstreaming issues related to children and armed conflict in United Nations political and peacekeeping missions.

Moreover, as amply documented by relevant bodies of the United Nations system, rape and other grave acts of sexual violence committed against children in conflict and post-conflict situations are a vital concern of the international community. Such aberrant acts are clearly used as a weapon of war, sometimes wielded to humiliate victims and subject them to the military tactics of parties to conflict, thereby forcibly displacing specific populations targeted by such acts and causing serious humanitarian crises. El Salvador recognizes the importance of eliminating such practices, which undermine the rights and the protection of children in both conflict and post-conflict situations.

In that regard, we should consider incorporating into the Organization's new international peacebuilding architecture the systematic analysis and formulation of specific recommendations for the Security Council on this issue to supplement the efforts currently being made by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

As a result of its experience in the area of peacebuilding, El Salvador believes that the protection of children's rights and the full reintegration of children into post-conflict societies are fundamental elements that must be considered and incorporated into the language of peace agreements, peacebuilding strategies and national reconciliation processes.

El Salvador welcomes the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on children and armed conflict. In particular, we wish to highlight the importance of considering the feasibility of including in country teams, which are established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), officials responsible for monitoring gender-based violence. Likewise, officials concerned with the area of gender violence and the protection of children, in particular disabled children, should jointly establish modalities to share information and coordinate their activities, including in the area of access to justice and legal recourse. In addition, we should fully consider possible links between that suggestion and the Security Council's follow-up on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Furthermore, special mention should be made of the situation, caused by armed conflict, in which children are involuntarily separated from their families. El Salvador, as a post-conflict country, has addressed that situation by establishing an inter-institutional commission to search for children who have disappeared as a result of armed conflict. The commission seeks to cooperate with public institutions involved in or responsible for child protection in finding children involuntarily separated from their

families, thus promoting family reunification based on the best interests of the child. Here, we express to Council members my country's willingness to share the experience gained by the inter-institutional commission if this is considered appropriate.

Finally, we should like to commend the excellent work done by Special Representative Coomaraswamy, to whom I pay tribute this afternoon. I also wish to reaffirm the political will of the Government of El Salvador to continue to promote measures aimed at strengthening the rule of law and democratic governance as basic tools for ensuring the effective protection of the human rights of all Salvadorans and, in particular, children in post-conflict situations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Al-Musawi** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express my country's appreciation for the section on Iraq contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158). We very much appreciate the significant role played in that regard by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

My delegation would like to make the following comments about the report's section on Iraq. First, the report covers the year 2008, and we all know that the situation in Iraq has generally improved since then. Indeed, the last few months of 2008 and the first few months of 2009 witnessed a number of positive developments, including clear improvements in the security situation and their overall positive impact on citizens and on the performance of the Government, whose ability to meet the people's security and safety needs has obviously improved. In paragraph 43 of his most recent report on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (S/2009/102), covering the period December 2008 to February 2009, the Secretary-General states:

> "In recent months, Iraq witnessed gradual stabilization and further improvements in security conditions, with a lower number of violent, high-visibility, mass-casualty attacks by militias, insurgents and criminal gangs."

Secondly, the ability of terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida, to carry out attacks has declined, and a number of terrorist leaders have been killed or have left Iraq. Moreover, Al-Qaida has lost some of its field commanders. Other leaders have left or have been arrested, which confirms that the organization has lost its capacity to control the situation on the ground and to recruit. This is the truth of the matter, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in paragraph 50 of his report (S/2009/102):

> "That the majority of these threats were not realized could be interpreted as a further sign that militia and insurgent leaders are losing influence, or that their capability and resources are being depleted."

Clearly, this organization is a foreign body, a cancer eating away at Iraqi society, and we expect that it will soon be eradicated.

The Iraqi Government has made painstaking efforts in a number of areas to ensure that all citizens, including children, will be able to enjoy their human rights, as noted in paragraph 41 of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (S/2009/102).

However, the report does not mention the positive effect of the cooperation between the Government and the Mission, and does not fully or accurately portray the situation on the ground. The reference in the report to the presence of cases of child recruitment by militias should have been submitted to the Iraqi Government so that we could, together with the Mission, express ourselves on these points, before the inclusion of various pieces of information in the report of the Secretary-General. To this extent, the report lacks credibility, and is based on exaggerations and a lack of specificity. It is incompatible with the most recent reports submitted by the Mission on the situation in Iraq. We would hope that, in the future, in cooperation with the Mission, the Office of the Special Representative will be able to submit more specific and updated information to reflect the reality of the situation.

Additionally, in terms of strengthening and protecting the rights, safety and security of children, various measures have been taken. We have developed a law to protect Iraqi children under the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. We are finalizing a draft piece of legislation on the establishment of a children's parliament in Iraq. We have conducted a study to ensure the rights of orphans. We have taken measures

along the border to stop the trafficking of children. We are endeavouring to reduce the phenomenon of the use of children in armed conflict. A number of programmes have been established in collaboration and coordination with UNICEF, such as one to protect children in situations of hardship, such as displaced children. We have established programmes to help children suffering from psychological traumas, with follow-up and inspection units for these children. We have promulgated a law prohibiting the use of child labour under the age of 15 or until such time as they have completed their primary education. We have also worked to include the culture of the rights of the child in school curricula, taking measures to prohibit all forms of violence against children. We have tried to ensure the protection of children from threats related to armed conflict, working in close cooperation with UNICEF and establishing specialized centres in residential neighbourhoods to monitor ongoing violations. The first centre for children traumatized by war was established with the help of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society. We have also rehabilitated and rebuilt schools destroyed by conflict and war. We ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2008.

In conclusion, we would like to warmly thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We want to emphasize that it is our intention to continue to cooperate with United Nations agencies to ensure the protection of human rights and the rights of children, which is a priority for my Government.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Palihakkara** (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on a subject that is very important to my country. Allow me to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your very able leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

In situations of armed conflict, children are the most vulnerable and deserve every form of protection possible. We are only too aware of this in Sri Lanka, as we deal with the Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) terrorism and its related violence. We appreciate the role of the Secretary-General and the valuable contribution of his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team under her mandate to address this important issue.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sri Lanka has enacted progressive legislation providing for the protection of children and has established institutional mechanisms to promote and create a protective environment for them. Notwithstanding these measures taken as a State party, non-State actors continue to use innocent children for violent purposes, disregarding repeated censure on the part of the Government and, of course, of this Council.

We are conscious that the primary responsibility for the protection of children and promotion of their welfare lies with the State. It is imperative for the State to ensure that children are not in danger and to prevent them from being used as accessories to violence. We have consistently rejected in the strongest possible terms the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict as unjustifiable under all circumstances. In fact, the Council will recall that Sri Lanka voluntarily submitted to the Working Group the case of a terrorist organization, the LTTE, using children for combat. We have been steadfast in advocating that this practice stop.

Sri Lanka was among the first Member States to volunteer to set up a national task force, in accordance with resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), to monitor and report on the activities of the LTTE. We support this Council imposing the strongest possible measures against those who perpetrate such crimes.

In this context, Sri Lanka reiterates its continuous policy of zero tolerance for child conscription and all other grave violations against children. We strongly believe in addressing issues of children and armed conflict in the terms set out in resolution 1612 (2005). The Council must consider this issue with a view to supporting peacebuilding and security in conflict-affected societies, in order to enable States to protect their children from non-State actors who violate children with impunity.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158) refers to the recruitment of children as young as 14 years old by the LTTE, which used to operated in an area in the north of Sri Lanka. The report shows that recruitment by this group has intensified in recent months. The Secretary-General has listed the LTTE as a persistent violator since its first listing in 2003. In that regard, we call upon the Security Council to

consider deterrent action against such persistent violators. The breakaway faction of the LTTE, now registered as a political party, has entered into a tri-partite action plan with UNICEF and the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation in December 2008, and has released most child conscripts. It is in the process of accounting for the remaining children, most of whom have returned to their families. UNICEF has reported substantial progress, but more work remains to be done. We appreciate the valuable work of UNICEF in that regard.

The transformation of a terrorist group into a political party, thereby allowing it to enter the democratic process, is a difficult and at times perhaps imperfect process, but that must be acknowledged as a positive step. The LTTE's release of former child conscripts into a process of rehabilitation must be welcomed and encouraged. In his report, the Secretary-General encourages the Council to insist that

> "parties in situations of armed conflict . . . implement concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children . . . ." (*S/2009/158, para. 164*)

We are pleased that we have already initiated such a process with one of the groups that was responsible for using children for combat in our country.

The Secretary-General in his report urges the Council

> "to consider means by which targeted measures may be applied against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children" (*Ibid., para. 167*).

The LTTE in Sri Lanka falls well within that category and deserves stronger targeted measures. In line with the Secretary-General's recommendations, our Government has launched successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and established rehabilitation centres with assistance from UNICEF and we remain fully committed to the reintegration process. As recommended by the Secretary-General, we hope that programmes for the effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children will receive timely and adequate resources and funding.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms rape and other grave acts of sexual violence committed against children in armed conflict, referred to in the report. There can be no place for such grave violations. We must find effective means to ensure that all actors abide by those principles. Any expansion of the mandate can be effective only when non-State actors are held to account through deterrent measures. Even on the core issue of the recruitment of children, we have hardly been able to make any change on the ground with the obduracy of groups like the LTTE. This will not inspire confidence in the process undertaken by the Council.

For instance, it is now over a decade since the LTTE publicly undertook to cease the recruitment and use of children as combatants and to release children within its ranks. That commitment was never implemented by the LTTE, which has continued to dramatically step up its recruitment and use of children as combatants. That continued long after the Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005) urging entities like the LTTE to cease such practices forthwith, release children within their ranks and enter into action plans.

Member States must deploy all efforts to find ways and means to make such non-State actors fall in line. The initiative by the Security Council to address the issue of children in armed conflict and subsequent efforts by the Working Group must be made to focus more on the real underlying issue of the recruitment of children. Tangible international action as opposed to mere expressions of concern is needed.

There is a need to encourage and guide former members of armed groups who have renounced violence and demonstrated a commitment to release children and cease child conscription. There is equally a need to take collective measures, including targeted sanctions, against those who continue to repeatedly violate resolution 1612 (2005), so as to demonstrate the Council's serious commitment to ending the use of children in armed conflict.

As the LTTE terrorism in Sri Lanka nears its end, the main priority for the Government is to care for and protect the children and people affected by that conflict in general, and especially, those who suffered as a result of the LTTE's persistent and deplorable practice of using child soldiers and human shields — a sentiment that was expressed by many delegations, including the Special Representative this morning.

The Government has comprehensively briefed Council members at several interactive discussions concerning the measures it has taken in that regard.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

**Mr. Olinger** (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I wish to thank you, Sir, for organizing this debate on children and armed conflict and to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her tireless commitment and her presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). I welcome its quality and relevance. My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to emphasize a few points and principles that are important to my country, which supports bilaterally a number of organizations that are working towards mitigating the plight of children in armed conflict, in particular UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Today, there is a range of legal and political instruments that seek to prevent the most serious suffering of children in armed conflict. Our common action to protect children in armed conflict also requires ratification, and especially implementation of relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In that context, we must recall the importance of ratifying the Rome Statute, which contains an important provision defining the act of conscripting or drafting children younger than 15 years of age into the armed forces as a war crime.

My Government believes it is important to bring to justice all of the perpetrators of war crimes and massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law, especially when those crimes have been committed against children. Impunity cannot be tolerated, and my delegation fully agrees with the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his report, that the Council must not hesitate to refer violations committed against children in armed conflict to the International Criminal Court.

The 2007 Paris Conference was also a turning point that recognized that violations of the rights of children are violations of international law and that a State must not only protect children on its territory, but must also do its utmost to put constant pressure on armed groups to obtain the release of conscripted children. Two years later, it is essential to continue to follow up on those commitments.

Reading the report of the Secretary-General confirms the fact that, in spite of strong international mobilization, children continue to be the first casualties of armed conflicts. I am speaking of child soldiers, who are on the front lines of more than 30 conflicts throughout the world, as well of the millions of children suffering from the atrocities of war, including maiming and sexual violence. In that context, my delegation fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to broaden the monitoring and reporting mechanisms under resolution 1612 (2005) on grave sexual violence against children.

Luxembourg calls upon the Security Council, in line with the recommendation of the Secretary-General, to ensure that all peacekeeping operations have sufficient resources to implement a child protection policy, in particular through the deployment of child protection advisers. The advisers should also draw attention to situations where peacekeeping might be carried out in a way that acts to the detriment of children.

All conflict situations in which atrocities are committed against children require our urgent attention. I wish to note a few specific cases. At present there is fighting in Sri Lanka, and civilians, including many children, are once again the main casualties. While violations of the rights of children are not known in their full scope, it is clear from the Secretary-General's report that the various parties to the conflict, in particular the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, have conscripted children, and that a large number of children have been kidnapped.

While the Government of Sri Lanka has assumed some responsibility for children leaving armed groups by promoting their reintegration, indiscriminate aerial bombardment and long-range artillery fire are causing grave suffering among the civilian population, particularly children. I join my voice to all those calling for an immediate ceasefire.

In conclusion, I wish to say a word on Burundi, on behalf of which my country is involved in the Peacebuilding Commission. Luxembourg welcomes the demobilization of former child soldiers, including girls, from the ranks of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL), and appeals strongly to the FNL and the Government to pursue the demobilization of other children in compliance with international norms. It is important now to facilitate their return and sustained

socio-economic reintegration through education and vocational training programmes. This situation demonstrates that the Peacebuilding Commission can play a critical role in the mobilization of resources for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and in supporting awareness campaigns concerning child soldiers.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Edrees** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by expressing our appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this debate on the comprehensive report (S/2009/158) submitted by the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and to his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her objective and balanced briefing, which exposed the grave violations that children face in armed conflicts, including killing, maiming, rape and sexual violence, abduction, recruitment, attacks on schools and hospitals being used as shelters, denial of humanitarian access, their use as human shields, and arbitrary detention, in violation of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The report adopts a constructive, pragmatic and cooperative approach towards all situations reported, researched, monitored and investigated. It was drafted following broad consultations with all United Nations entities and relevant task forces committed to the principles of dialogue and target-sharing, as well as with Governments that hold the primary responsibility for protecting children. Such cooperation has ultimately led to some progress in such countries as Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines and Colombia, and to positive developments on issues related to violence against children in the Sudan. Those developments include the adoption of a presidential decree of pardon for 99 children out of 110 recruited by the Justice and Equality Movement, who attacked Omdurman and were captured by the Sudan Armed Forces, and the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations in addressing violations by rebel groups against children on both sides, in investigating Government violations and in bringing proven perpetrators to justice.

However, despite all the efforts and field visits, the report paints a disturbing picture of ongoing violence against children in conflict zones and of new forms of violence in some of those areas. This phenomenon requires close coordination between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council in studying the root causes of the increased use of children in armed conflicts, the main causes of violence against children, and the means to fully implement international standards and to guarantee full respect for international law and international humanitarian law, including through the revitalization and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in order to prevent any involvement of children in armed conflicts.

We have followed with great concern the grave atrocities perpetrated by the Israel Defense Forces against children in Lebanon and the Palestinian occupied territories, including the illegal use of cluster munitions by Israel during the 2006 attacks on defenceless people in the villages, schools and farms of Lebanon, as revealed and recorded in the report and monitored by various United Nations agencies. We demand that the Security Council ensure Israel's cooperation with the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict by handing over relevant data, including the necessary information on landmines and cluster bomb sites. That would allow those munitions to be cleared and prevent the victimization of more children exposed to the threat of explosive remnants of war in the affected areas; yet Israel continues to ignore all the Special Representative's appeals in that regard.

As for Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, the report reveals old and ongoing grave violations by Israel against Palestinian children. These include the killing of thousands by the Israel Defense Forces and the injuring and maiming of thousands more by the use of phosphoric bombs, missile strikes, internationally prohibited ammunition, tank fire, aerial bombardment and rubber-coated bullets in numerous ongoing attacks by Israeli settlers against children in villages. The Israel Defense Forces have also used Palestinian children as human shields, bombing schools and killing and injuring the students and teachers therein. Israeli settlers, too, have attacked schools, including those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and others, hospitals, infrastructure and humanitarian relief agencies, and have severely

hindered access to humanitarian assistance and medical relief services. All of these acts violate international law and call for the direct intervention of the Security Council to ensure that these atrocities are effectively addressed and prevented from recurring and that their perpetrators are brought to justice.

In so doing, the Security Council and the General Assembly must give due attention to the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child following its review of the first and only report submitted by Israel, in 2002, on the implementation of its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government of Israel continues to completely ignore those recommendations, which include taking all immediate and necessary measures to end violence against children; taking all immediate and necessary measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts; investigating forthwith all incidents of the killing or injuring of children and bringing the perpetrators to justice; and compensating the victims of human rights violations, especially children, and rehabilitating and reintegrating them into society.

At the same time, we demand that Israel implement the recommendations set forth by the Human Rights Council at its most recent session concerning the universal periodic review of the situation of human rights in Israel, in particular those related to Palestinian children under occupation.

Egypt supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the criteria set out in the annexes of the report be broadened to include not only those perpetrators convicted of recruiting children as soldiers and of sexual violence against children, but also those guilty of all six forms of grave violations against children in armed conflict, on the condition that indictment relies on verified data, field visits and field follow-ups, as well as data collected through the coordinated efforts of all the relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, in close consultation with the Governments concerned and with the support of all United Nations Member States.

In conclusion, there is a special role for the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We believe it is necessary to follow up on its recommendations, which were adopted after careful study of each situation and after due consultation with parties concerned, including Governments and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts, specially those recommendations regarding children in the occupied Arab territories. We also stress how important it is for the Working Group to take into consideration recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the situation of children in armed conflict, bearing in mind the Committee's role as a comprehensive mechanism bringing together expertise from many Member States with a value-added perspective that should be used to ensure that its potential benefit is realized to the greatest extent possible.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Zhanibekov** (Kazakhstan): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

Almost 20 years after the World Summit for Children and 10 years after adoption of Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), on children and armed conflict, the issue of grave violations of the rights of children in armed conflicts is still an important item on the Security Council's agenda. Moreover, because of the rising number of conflict situations worldwide, the data on children affected by hostilities in certain regions remains daunting.

The Security Council has defined six types of grave violations of children's rights as crimes under international humanitarian law: the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and hospitals, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access to children.

We believe that by making full use of existing tools, the United Nations system can promote a considerable decrease in the number of children affected by armed conflicts by preventing violations of children's rights and addressing impunity of violators. The basic data collection instrument is the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations of children's rights, as established by resolution 1612 (2005). That instrument is a main source of data for adequate measures by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to address child rights violations.

Kazakhstan supports activities making use of this unique tool and highly appreciates efforts of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to extend the research scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We must acknowledge that this process is a considerable step towards successful elimination of violations of children's rights in armed conflicts. Incorporating new components into the scope of the research of the monitoring and reporting mechanism could lead to more balanced and comprehensive protection of children's rights, including those relating to health.

I would like furthermore to stress the issue of the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants and children affected by armed conflict. During a previous Security Council debate, Kazakhstan underlined the necessity to put in place the conditions for ensuring the education of children who have been victims of the consequences of war. The high-quality education of children is a key to avoiding exploitation, violence and their recruitment into existing armed groups. Professional education of children affected by armed conflict is not a short-term investment. However, it is vital to draw the attention of the world community to the possibilities of adequate education for such children as an intrinsic part of establishing a post-conflict system. For this reason, an educational process requires proper financial and technical support from sponsoring countries.

Kazakhstan believes that lack of education and the resulting poverty and inadequate level of development can only exacerbate the condition of the population in conflict areas. In this regard, we entirely support the initiative of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, together with UNICEF, on preparing a thematic collection containing the best examples of the reintegration of children into society through education.

In spite of the absence of armed conflict on the territory of our country, Kazakhstan has acquired solid national experience in overcoming financial and social difficulties. A decision not to cut financing for the educational system was accepted even in the current difficult period of development. The international merit-based *Bolashak* — "Future" — scholarship system for gifted young people founded by the President of Kazakhstan has been operating successfully for 15 years. As a decade and a half of practice shows, this policy of the Government of Kazakhstan has paid off. This policy also includes 100 merit-based educational scholarships provided annually to students from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Missing the opportunity to provide young people with a proper education can lead to the loss of a generation that should be the foundation for building a newly fashioned State.

We believe that active discussion during the current open debate will draw well-deserved attention from all stakeholders to efforts to overcome the most destructive consequences of war: the undermining of the life and health of future generations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

**Mr. Ndabarasa** (Rwanda): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Council. We greatly appreciate your delegation's laudable efforts in organizing this debate on children and armed conflict and congratulate it on its assumption of the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also congratulate the French delegation on the successful conclusion of their mandate as Chair of the Working Group.

Allow me to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless efforts in highlighting the issue of children and armed conflict. My thanks go also to the Secretary-General, to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, and to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their briefings and for the commendable work they have done in addressing the impact of armed conflict on children. By the same token, allow me to pay particular tribute to Ms. Grace Akallo for her testimony and her resilience, and for putting a face on the issue before us.

The issue of children and armed conflict is a symptom of the failure to comprehensively address the causes of conflict and to utilize existing mechanisms for the prevention of conflict. If we are to adequately address this scourge it is imperative that we utilize the mechanisms we have in place to address the causes of conflict and to prevent conflicts from arising in the first place.

Allow me to address a few specific issues in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158). The report acknowledges the significance of the recently concluded "Umoja Wetu" joint operations between the

Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. These operations have greatly undermined the capabilities of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and its sub-groups and have led to the reintegration of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) into the Congolese Armed Forces. But, most important, they have resulted in the repatriation of refugees held hostage by the FDLR and its sub-groups, many of whom were child combatants. However, the FDLR and its sub-groups, which are listed in the report as persistent offenders, continue to forcibly recruit children into their ranks and commit serious crimes, including sexual violence. My delegation calls upon the international community, through the Security Council and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), to support and build upon the progress made by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and to utilize the targeted measures, including sanctions, at its disposal to eliminate the threat posed by the FDLR and its sub-groups.

The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 included some of the most inhumane acts of violence targeted at women and girls and the use of sexual violence as an element of genocide. My delegation therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation to expand the protection framework by adding rape and other grave acts of sexual violence against children as a criterion for inclusion on the annexed lists, as well as to strengthen the monitoring and reporting of those crimes.

We welcome the progress made in mainstreaming children and armed conflict issues into peacekeeping and political missions. We have taken particular note of the efforts outlined by Mr. Le Roy with regard to MONUC-UNICEF collaboration to address the issue of children and armed conflict in the Kivus. We also welcome the efforts undertaken by the Department of Political Affairs in that respect. However, mainstreaming alone will not address the issue of children and armed conflict. The Security Council needs to empower peacekeeping missions to implement policies on the ground through clearer and more robust mandates.

In his recommendations, the Secretary-General correctly points out the regional dimensions of this issue and the need to establish mechanisms and strategies for coordination and cooperation. My Government and that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have shown the way forward. We urge the international community to follow our lead in taking practical and pragmatic steps to address the issue of children and armed conflict.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your delegation's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to commend the Mexican delegation for its dedication in successfully guiding the Council's work, as well as for the participation at this meeting of your country's Minister for Foreign Affairs. I also thank your delegation for convening this open debate and for providing us with a second opportunity this month to address the Council on an important issue, in this case one that affects the most vulnerable members of society: children.

The Council's interest in the issue of children and armed conflict is commendable, but it should not be relegated to the theoretical realm. The recommendations of the Secretary-General and of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict must be implemented. The Council's responsibility regarding the protection of children in armed conflict should not be limited to monitoring the situation as regards recruiting, arming and exploiting minors in the camps and on the battlefield. It should also monitor the situation with regard to children who are not able to fully enjoy their rights or whose rights are denied altogether — rights that have been guaranteed to them under international law and conventions. This includes denial of the rights to health, education and access to humanitarian assistance in conflict situations and humanitarian disasters. We should therefore focus on strengthening monitoring and reporting on serious violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. That should also include violations of the right of children to personal security, health and education.

Although the international community has amply demonstrated its concern about such serious violations, we note the fragility of the international will in many instances when it comes to addressing the issue of children being deprived of education in situations of armed conflict, including foreign occupation, despite

the fact that education is a fundamental right of the utmost importance to children affected by conflict. Roadblocks that prevent students from attending schools and universities — thereby depriving them of their legitimate right to education — result in their falling far behind in academic achievement and produce a culture of despair and fear among young people, rather than the culture of hope and life that is the primary reason for putting an end to conflict in the long term.

The military aggression by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip late last year was a glaring example of the types of violations to which children in armed conflict situations are subjected. That aggression included the killing of hundreds of Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli forces, including students sheltering in schools that were directly hit and in hospitals deprived of urgent medical supplies. The Secretary-General highlighted some of those grave violations in his report (S/2009/158) to the Council submitted pursuant to the presidential statement issued as document S/PRST/2008/6.

In that spirit, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Misnad, First Lady of Qatar and Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, took the initiative as UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education to deplore the destruction of educational institutions of the Gaza Strip and called on the Security Council to develop a plan to designate schools and educational institutions as safe havens for students and their families and to ensure that they had access to humanitarian services, deliveries of basic goods, and evacuation services for the sick and wounded. Previously, Her Highness had addressed a letter to the Council (see S/2009/12) calling on it to assume its responsibility and investigate crimes perpetrated by the occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, in particular children.

We reiterate our call for the Council to investigate the Israeli army's direct attacks on Gaza schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, so as to determine who was responsible and bring them to justice. In that regard, I should like to refer to the report of the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry into that situation in order to emphasize the importance of following up on it.

Finally, it is crucial that we not lose sight of the fact that children are the most precious resource in the building of peaceful societies. The Government of Qatar will seek to cooperate with international partners and international organizations in order to ensure the right of children to education in conflict situations. The Security Council should also renew its commitment to international efforts aimed at protecting and promoting the right of children to education, so as to promote international peace and security.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

**Mr. Swe** (Myanmar): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on a subject that is of great concern to all of us. My delegation also joins others in expressing our thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her informative briefing.

Armed conflict always takes a human toll and causes devastation. It is even more shocking when children become its victims or are forced to become armed perpetrators in conflicts. Myanmar shares the view that the most effective and sustainable solution to protect children in armed conflict is to address the root causes of conflict. Therefore, the promotion of sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of national reconciliation, good governance and the protection of human rights would go a long way towards preventing and resolving conflicts.

Myanmar has taken concrete steps to prevent conflict and to protect children in armed conflict. Stringent laws and regulations have been put in place. Under the Defence Services Act, Myanmar's military prohibits the conscription or recruitment of children under 18 years of age. In order to prevent underage recruitment, new recruits for the military services must undergo stringent scrutiny, not only during the recruitment and training period but also during the post-training period. To further strengthen that screening process, in 2004, the Government established a high-level committee for the prevention of the military recruitment of underage children. Under the committee's supervision and surveillance, between 2004 and 2009, a total of 296 instances of underage recruitment were detected, resulting in discharge from military service. While those children were returned to their respective guardians, punitive action was taken

against military personnel who failed to abide by recruitment rules and regulations. In 2008 alone, punitive action was taken against 23 military personnel. The Committee also works in close cooperation with UNICEF and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's office in the area of information-sharing and awareness-raising campaigns.

With the support and cooperation of the United Nations country team, the action plan is being updated to bring it in line with international standards. Updated information on the work of the Committee has been provided to the United Nations country team on a regular basis. This includes lists of and detailed information on underage children who have been discharged from military service. For ease of verification and follow-up by the United Nations country team, the addresses of the discharged underage recruits will be provided in future through the information-sharing process. The Myanmar Government has also extended an invitation to the United Nations country team to be present during the hand-over of the underage children to their respective guardians.

Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns were also carried out for military personnel, police personnel, social workers and the general public. The Government, with assistance from UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations such as World Vision (Myanmar) and Save the Children (Myanmar), conducted seminars and workshops on the subject. The Social Welfare Department, in collaboration with UNICEF, published and distributed to members of the military and armed groups a pocket-sized handbook on preventing the recruitment of underage children.

Despite the commitment made at the highest level and the concrete steps taken by the Myanmar Government, which have been recognized in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158), it is regrettable that the well-trained and disciplined Myanmar national army, the Tatmadaw Kyi, is still listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's report. Myanmar urges that due recognition be given to the progress made by the Government and that our national army be removed from the list in future reports.

Myanmar wishes to underscore that the Government is also making progress in the national reconciliation process. Of the armed ethnic insurgent groups, 95 per cent, a total of more than 100,000 people, returned to the legal fold between 1989 and 2008. The olive branch is still extended to the remaining 5 per cent. The former insurgent groups are now working with the people and the Government on the development of their respective regions. They are also actively participating in the national political process aimed at transforming Myanmar into a democratic nation. Today, peace and stability prevail in almost all corners of Myanmar. The country is no longer in a situation of armed conflict. The situation in Myanmar is therefore no longer relevant to the discussion of the issue of children and armed conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that my Government is committed at the highest level to preventing the recruitment of child soldiers into Myanmar's armed forces. To this end, Myanmar will continue to support and cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations country team.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

**Ms. Blum** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, and the delegation of Mexico on the effective manner in which you have conducted the work of both the Security Council during the month of April and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. My delegation appreciates your initiative in convening this debate of the Council.

In the political Constitution of my country, we give priority to children's rights, since we consider that their protection is in society's highest interests. This precept is reflected in our institutional structure, which permits the implementation of public policies aimed at protecting children and, in particular, those children whose rights have been infringed.

In the context of our comprehensive child welfare policy, in December last year Colombia voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The voluntary nature of its acceptance is based on the fact that the situation in Colombia is covered in annex II of the report of the Secretary General (S/2009/158) and is not on the Security Council's agenda.

In accepting the monitoring and reporting mechanism, my country recognizes the contribution

that the United Nations can make to the national Government's primary duty to protect children affected by the actions of illegal armed groups.

The Colombian State has established a comprehensive strategy to address the prevention of the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups, as well as the protection, release and reintegration of children who have been rescued from such groups.

The first of these aspects, prevention, is the main objective of the intersectorial commission created by the Government of Colombia in December 2007. The strategies of this commission, led by the Vice-President of the Republic, include promoting the transformation of family, community and institutional environments into factors that safeguard children's rights. The aim is to consolidate protection networks that can reduce children's risk of exploitation by illegal armed groups. Since its creation, the commission has focused its work in 61 municipalities with high social and economic vulnerability, where illegal armed groups are present and the risk of recruitment has been reported.

In terms of the protection and restitution of the fundamental rights of children rescued from illegal armed groups, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare has provided assistance to 3,940 such children to date. The programmes of the Institute seek to provide comprehensive physical and psychological care and to prepare children and youths for complete reintegration into society.

My delegation has taken note of the eighth report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict. As we have indicated on other occasions, we do not consider it appropriate to include references to criminal organizations or gangs in the Secretary-General's reports, as such organizations do not fall within the purview established in the Council's resolutions. One example of this is the case of criminal groups devoted to drug trafficking.

Furthermore, my delegation wishes to express its concern over some passages in the report that go beyond existing provisions of the Security Council's resolutions concerning children and armed conflict. This applies particularly to references to Colombia included in paragraph 147 and in the listing on page 38 of the report. The mechanism in Colombia is about to be implemented. It is therefore inappropriate to evaluate it in advance, even more so when this goes beyond the framework established by the Council's resolutions.

Allow me to make some observations on the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report.

The Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict have established a clear distinction between situations that are on the agenda of the Council and those that are not. The existence of annex I and annex II in the report of the Secretary-General is sufficient embodiment of this distinction, which should therefore be maintained.

Likewise, the Council should continue to attach greater weight and priority to the fundamental issue that led to the creation of the mechanism — the recruitment and exploitation of children. Also, any implementation of targeted measures must be in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Colombia, for its part, rejects every form of sexual violence, including rape and other manifestations of sexual abuse. They are even more reprehensible when they prey on children. My delegation considers that Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) constitute the guiding compass on this matter.

Allow me to conclude with an unequivocal reiteration of the commitment of the Government of Colombia to the protection and promotion of children's rights. The reference point of that commitment is the framework established by the Security Council, as well as the existing mechanisms and procedures. In that spirit, we will maintain a continued dialogue to advance towards the goals identified.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

**Mr. Musayev** (Azerbaijan): At the outset, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this important open debate and express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/158) on children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her comprehensive presentation, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings on the matter.

We reiterate our commitment to continuing to contribute to the activities of the existing United Nations mechanisms and other relevant organizations and agencies with the aim of ensuring more effective protection of child rights and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

Azerbaijan's interest in the topic under consideration is obvious and derives from its practical experience in addressing the impact on children of the armed aggression against my country and in engaging in international efforts to ensure respect by the relevant party of its obligations under international law.

The occupation by Armenia of the territories of Azerbaijan exerts considerable influence, inter alia, on the humanitarian aspect of the problem and primarily affects the most vulnerable groups. Azerbaijan continues to suffer one of the highest proportions of refugees and displaced persons in the world, large numbers of whom are children. The most serious international offences have been committed in the course of the conflict. Even children have not been spared. During one night alone in February 1992, when the town of Khojaly in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan was captured by invading Armenian forces, 63 children were intentionally killed and dozens were maimed and taken hostage. Of more than 4,200 people reported missing in connection with the conflict, 47 are children.

In recent years, the issue of children and armed conflict has been inscribed firmly on the international agenda and a solid body of international legal norms and standards has been elaborated. Important steps have been taken through the application and enforcement of these norms and standards to achieve accountability for grave child rights violations. Indeed, the international community has witnessed some unprecedented initiatives to address impunity.

The engagement of the Security Council has increased the general awareness of the need to protect children in armed conflict, significantly advanced the scope of actions and created opportunities to improve common approaches in this regard. Although progress has been made in a number of situations of armed conflict, children are still suffering in many places worldwide and continue to be the primary victims of war. This bitter truth represents a profound challenge to the international legal order and therefore requires the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate and prevent illegal practices affecting children's rights, as well as to fight impunity for grave violations.

It is important to acknowledge the equal weight of all grave violations. Azerbaijan shares the view that the existing criteria of violations should be expanded to include those responsible for the intentional killing and maiming of children. At the same time, particular consideration should be given to internally displaced children in the context of ensuring their inalienable right to return, and to the implications for the protection of child rights of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation.

Another challenging issue requiring urgent action is that of children taken hostage and reported missing in connection with armed conflict. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/183, of which Azerbaijan was a main sponsor, requests States to pay the utmost attention to the problem of missing children and to take appropriate measures to search for and identify such children and to reunite them with their families.

We look forward to the adoption of the presidential statement, which will focus on the ways and means by which the international community can continue to contribute to identifying long-term and sustained solutions to the problem.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

**Mrs. Sahussarungsi** (Thailand): On behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, I wish to warmly congratulate Mexico on your excellent work, Sir, as President of the Security Council for the month of April. I would also like to join other delegations in expressing our solidarity with Mexico in your effort to tackle the current public health crisis.

Thailand appreciates the leadership of Mexico in advancing the agenda of children and armed conflict in the Security Council. We share the commitment and concerns of the international community on this critical issue. In that connection, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to share with the Council our views on this important issue.

First, Thailand notes that the Security Council has made significant contributions to the issue of children and armed conflict, in accordance with its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

We welcome the ongoing mainstreaming of child protection in various tasks of the United Nations. In particular, we welcome the ongoing attempt to incorporate children's issues into peacekeeping operations mandated by the Security Council and to ensure that children's concerns are duly reflected and taken into account in all phases of mission planning. We also welcome the mainstreaming of a child-conscious approach in various political and peacebuilding missions.

In the meantime, we have been following with interest the efforts to strengthen the present mechanism established by the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict. While we believe that there is certainly room for improving and consolidating the current mechanism, we agree with the view expressed earlier that an incremental, step-by-step approach, based on thorough reflection and consideration of the Council, should be the way forward. We cannot stress enough that such key principles as respect, sincere dialogue and cooperation, the building of trust and confidence, and consent should form the basis of all undertakings of the United Nations agencies in their relationship with the concerned Governments.

Secondly, because challenges relating to children are multidimensional and diverse, Thailand believes that greater coordination and coherence among relevant United Nations forums and agencies are needed. In addition to the Security Council, we welcome active interest in child-related issues in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, United Nations funds and programmes, as well as relevant human rights treaty bodies. We believe that each of those forums and agencies has its uniqueness, strengths and constraints, in line with their respective mandates. With better coordination and coherence among those diverse instruments, the United Nations system as a whole will be able to better respond to the challenges pertaining to children around the world.

Thirdly, Thailand strongly believes that a holistic approach is needed to address challenges relating to children and armed conflict in a sustainable manner. We need to understand that each situation is unique and that there is no one-size-fits-all prescription to every situation around the world. The best way to address these challenges in the long term is to tackle, with understanding, the political, economic and social conditions that have given rise to each situation. We join other delegations in reiterating the primary responsibility of the States concerned for ensuring the effective protection and promotion of the rights of the child in their respective jurisdictions.

At the same time, we believe that the international community can play a complementary role by providing constructive encouragement and appropriate support to those States. In that regard, we call on the international community to invest more in areas that can make a real difference on the ground, such as the provision of basic needs, the improvement of people's well-being, basic health care, education, poverty alleviation, security, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. All of those have both empowering and protection effects on the societies concerned as a whole.

Fourthly, Thailand's commitment to the cause of the advancement and protection of children has been and will always be strong, firm and consistent. That seriousness has been well reflected in our efforts domestically, regionally and internationally. At present, Thailand is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, including that on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We are committed to the effective implementation of the obligations contained therein.

We have invested heavily in various measures to promote, protect and develop children throughout the country so that they can become a productive force in society. We have been doing our utmost to ensure universal access to quality education and a safe learning environment for our children. Special attention has also been given to the issue of human resource development to ensure that all children in Thailand, regardless of their background, are well equipped for the challenges of the globalizing world. At the same time, earnest efforts have been made to promote the appreciation of diversity, tolerance, moderation and social harmony among children in Thailand.

At the regional level, Thailand, as the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has been working closely with other ASEAN member States to advance the issue of human rights in the region, including the rights of the child. Later this year, ASEAN is scheduled to establish a human rights body to advance human rights in the region. ASEAN

member States have also been working together through various initiatives to promote and protect the rights of the child as a part of the ASEAN community-building process.

Last but not least, Thailand cannot stress enough that the utmost care should be exercised in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on the issue of children and armed conflict. It should be clear that the scope of the report should be restricted strictly to situations of armed conflict in accordance with applicable international law. In that connection, we would like to underline that any reference in such a report to any country where there is no situation of armed conflict in accordance with applicable international law — for example, a reference to Thailand — is not only unwarranted but also misleading, and therefore should not be repeated in the future. A consultative and cooperative approach based on the willingness to listen and understand the complexity, sensitivity and nuances of each case is needed to ensure that any well-intentioned effort does not have unintended adverse effects on the ground, in particular inadvertent impacts on children themselves.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

**Mrs. Khoudaverdian** (Armenia): First of all, allow me to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for the initiative to convene us today to launch a discussion on such an important issue. Allow me also to commend the Secretary-General for the report (S/2009/158) he has submitted on an issue that leaves none of us indifferent. We would also like to express our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy for her detailed presentation of the report.

I join all previous speakers in their determination to ensure children's right to live and grow in peace and dignity, which is a primary responsibility of any Government and any society. Today's discussion and the moving testimony of Ms. Akallo are tangible evidence of how unprotected many of those who constitute the most vulnerable segment of our societies, children, continue to be.

I come from a region that has experienced a number of armed conflicts in recent decades. The problems and concerns mentioned here are therefore, unfortunately, not purely humanitarian in nature for us. Today, a final resolution to the conflicts in the South Caucasus is still pending. A no-war/no-peace situation cannot ensure a safe and decent future for children and young people who have already witnessed all the atrocities that wars bring. It is our belief that only a fundamental and comprehensive political settlement of the existing disputes can bring long-lasting peace and stability to the region, thereby securing the rights of our children to a peaceful future.

Armenia has more than once reiterated its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts, for the benefit and progress of the entire region. In that regard, I reserve the right to respond to the statement of the delegation of Azerbaijan, which has once again used this high forum to misled Member States with its unchanged rhetoric. It is well known that it was Azerbaijan that, two decades ago, unleashed a full-scale war against what was at that time its own peaceful population of Nagorny Karabakh, forcing tens of thousands of people, including children, to quit their homes and become refugees and internally displaced persons, and leaving thousands of them orphaned and maimed.

The military actions undertaken by our neighbour have had unpredictable consequences for Azerbaijan itself. Today, it is in everyone's interest to take decisive steps to move the peace process forward in order to protect our children from renewed violence. Instead, we continue to hear militaristic rhetoric from high-level Azerbaijani authorities, which is not only detrimental to the establishment of the confidence that is so badly needed between our two peoples, but also creates an atmosphere of hostility and hatred in which new generations of Azerbaijani youth are being brought up.

Armenia strongly believes in the need to achieve a comprehensive settlement to conflicts through the negotiating process. We are grateful for this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to guaranteeing the protection of children.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Benin.

**Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to express my delegation's high appreciation for the way in which your country, Sir, has led the work of the Security Council this month. The presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico has considerably enhanced the quality of this debate.

My delegation notes with great satisfaction the Secretary-General's personal contribution and the diligent participation of the Deputy Secretary-General. We see all this as strong evidence of the recognition of the gravity of the situation of children in armed conflict. We pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her entire team, as well as to the task leaders of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, for their untiring efforts and praiseworthy self-sacrifice in discharging the heavy burden entrusted to them.

The Secretary-General's very disturbing annual report (S/2009/158), which Ms. Coomaraswamy eloquently presented to the Council, says a great deal about the scale of the challenge posed by the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and of the massive violations of their human rights. We welcome the commitment of the members of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, charged with responsibility on this issue. They have played a significant role in achieving progress in the implementation of the action plans adopted by parties, in cooperation with the mechanism, thus demonstrating the great utility of the mechanism in assisting affected children.

The invaluable contribution of UNICEF to the implementation of child protection in the field, in conditions that are well known to be extremely difficult, is a particular credit to its leaders and staff at headquarters and in the field. To my country, Benin — which negotiated and co-sponsored resolution 1612 (2005) in the hope of putting a rapid end to the aforementioned phenomena — their upsurge during the reporting period is most alarming. The situation requires bold measures to increase the pressure on parties to conflicts that continue to commit grave violations of children's rights. In that respect, the Security Council should use the instruments at its disposal to obtain the cooperation of unrepentant violators of children's rights.

There is an urgent need to further develop the monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to ensure that it covers all crimes committed against children and to end the prevailing use of double standards. My delegation advocates the inclusion on the list of criteria of the six identified violations of children's rights, to include the no less horrendous practice of sexual violence against children. Such practices are sufficiently serious for the International Criminal Court to involve itself by initiating proceedings against perpetrators in cases where national jurisdictions are unable to provide justice to victims.

The necessary arrangements must be made to ensure that children exposed to such reprehensible practices are not abandoned to their sad fate. The responsibility to assist, which is incumbent on the international community, requires action. These crimes are part and parcel of the responsibility to protect that it must fulfil through the competent entities, which must use the means at their disposal. Peacekeeping operations should be fully up to speed in that respect. We note the briefing on that issue by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain le Roy.

In all circumstances, there is a need to end impunity for crimes against children in armed conflict. The United Nations should fully exploit every opportunity for action under resolution 1612 (2005). If there should prove to be a need at this stage of its implementation for an additional resolution to ensure the universality of the mechanism and to enhance its effectiveness in the fight to protect children in armed conflict effectively, no artificial obstacles should be raised to hinder its adoption.

We must give serious consideration to strengthening national mechanisms for effective follow-up and assistance to affected children. Appropriate assistance programmes should be established at the national and local levels to ensure the rehabilitation and lasting social reintegration of demobilized children. The testimony of Ms. Grace Akallo has shown us the path we must follow in order to provide a better future to children mistreated in armed conflict.

In conclusion, my delegation associates itself with the presidential statement to be adopted at the end of this meeting. The deadline which the Security Council has set for finalizing its deliberations on the issue of extending the annexes to the report represents a commitment that we duly note. Beyond the efforts under way to increase pressure on violators of children's rights in armed conflict, the best form of protection would be the cessation of such conflicts. We have always cherished that hope. We must enhance diplomatic measures to reconcile belligerents and to

help countries at war to return rapidly to the path of peace.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council takes note with appreciation of the eighth report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) on children and armed conflict and of the positive developments referred to in the report, and notes the continuing challenges in the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) reflected therein.

"The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children, and its determination to ensure respect for, and the implementation of, its resolution 1612 (2005) and all its previous resolutions on children and armed conflict, as well as respect for other applicable international law related to the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

"The Security Council stresses, in this regard, the importance of adopting a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights.

"The Security Council acknowledges that the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) in situations listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158) has generated progress and invites the Secretary-General, where applicable, to strengthen the efforts to bring the monitoring and reporting mechanism to its full capacity in order to allow for prompt advocacy and effective response to all violations and abuses committed against children. In this regard, the Council reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to provide additional administrative support to its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

"The Security Council reiterates its equally strong condemnation of the continuing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict. The Council condemns all other violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The Council demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.

"The Security Council expresses deep concern that civilians, in particular children, continue to account for a considerable number of casualties resulting from killing and maiming in armed conflicts, including as a result of deliberate targeting, indiscriminate and excessive use of force, indiscriminate use of landmines and cluster munitions and use of children as human shields.

"The Security Council further expresses deep concern with the high incidence and appalling levels of brutality, of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, girls and boys, committed in the context of and associated with armed conflict, including the use or commission of rape and other forms of sexual violence in some situations as a tactic of war.

"The Security Council recognizes the importance of including in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict those parties to armed conflict that commit acts of killing and maiming of children that are prohibited under applicable international law or acts of rape and other sexual violence against children that are prohibited under applicable international law, in situations of armed conflict, and expresses its intention to continue its consideration of this issue, in order to take action within three months of this date.

"The Security Council reiterates its call on parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary General's report (S/2009/158) that have not already done so to prepare and

implement, without further delay, concrete time-bound action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, and to address all other violations and abuses committed against children and undertake specific commitments and measures in this regard, in close cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting.

"The Security Council expresses its concern with situations where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports in halting recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, including through the preparation and implementation of concrete time-bound action plans, and reiterates its determination to ensure respect for its resolutions on children and armed conflict, making use of all the tools provided in its resolution 1612 (2005), including action as appropriate in accordance with paragraph 9 of its resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council strongly emphasizes the need for concerned Member States to take decisive and immediate action against persistent perpetrators of violations against children, and to bring to justice those responsible for the recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law and other violations against children through national justice systems and, where applicable, international justice mechanisms and mixed criminal courts and tribunals, with a view to ending impunity for those committing crimes against children.

"The Security Council reiterates the primary responsibility of States in providing effective protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts, and calls upon them to comply with their obligations under applicable international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, and encourages States to strengthen national measures for the prevention of violations against children in armed conflict, including recruitment and use of children and their use in hostilities in violation of applicable international law, inter alia, by enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits such recruitment and use as well as other violations, and urges States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to this Convention and its Optional Protocols.

"The Security Council reiterates the importance of the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and goods and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children affected by armed conflict, and stresses the importance for all, within the framework of humanitarian assistance, of upholding and respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

"The Security Council remains concerned with the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and its effect on and their use by children in armed conflict.

"The Security Council welcomes the sustained engagement of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and requests it to adopt, with the administrative support of the Secretariat, timely conclusions and recommendations in line with resolution 1612 (2005). The Council encourages its Working Group to continue its review process, to enhance its ability to follow up the implementation of its recommendations and the development and implementation of action plans to halt recruitment and use of children, and to consider and react in a timely manner to information on situations of children and armed conflict, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF. It also invites its Working Group to enhance its communication with relevant Security Council sanctions committees, including by forwarding pertinent information.

"The Security Council commends the work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and emphasizes the importance of her country visits in promoting collaboration between the United Nations and Governments and enhancing dialogue with parties to armed conflict.

"The Security Council also commends the work carried out by UNICEF as well as other relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, within their respective mandates, the child protection advisers of United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions in cooperation with national Governments and relevant civil society actors.

"The Security Council encourages the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in mainstreaming child protection into all peacekeeping missions, in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, and encourages the deployment of child protection advisers to peacekeeping operations, as well as into relevant peacebuilding and political missions.

"The Security Council invites the Peacebuilding Commission to continue to promote child protection in post-conflict situations under its consideration.

"Given the regional dimension of some conflicts, the Security Council encourages Member States, United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions and United Nations country teams to establish appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns such as recruitment, release and reintegration of children.

"The Security Council recognizes the important role of education in armed conflict areas, including as a means to achieve the goal of halting and preventing recruitment and re-recruitment of children in violation of applicable international law, and calls upon all parties concerned to continue to ensure that all children associated with armed forces and groups systematically have access to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes where they can benefit, inter alia, from education.

"The Security Council also urges parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education, in particular attacks or threats of attack on school children or teachers as such, the use of schools for military operations, and attacks on schools that are prohibited by applicable international law.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to submit his next report by May 2010 on the implementation of its resolutions on children and armed conflict."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2009/9.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.*